‘Voting early, often’: Early voting at federal, New South Wales and Victorian elections – 2002 to 2015

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for publication for the award of any other degree or diploma in the university. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Nathaniel Reader

17 May 2017
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Abstract

Early voting in person is the fastest growing form of electoral participation at Australian elections. Although a national trend, early voting has increased most at federal, NSW state and Victorian state elections. Since 2002 there has been a 320 percent increase in early voting at federal elections, a 370 percent increase at NSW state elections and a 400 percent increase at Victorian state elections. Since 2002 parliaments in these jurisdictions have also passed minor and technical legislative reforms easing access to early voting, including changes to the criteria determining who can vote early. However, little is known about what factors influenced these minor electoral reforms, and what impact early voting has had on voter turnout at Australian elections. This thesis uses a mixed-methods research design to explore these two research problems, developing an assessment framework for minor electoral reform for the first problem, and four voter turnout models for the second problem. In relation to the first problem, it finds that minor electoral reforms to early voting were influenced by a lack of direct partisan influence, the electoral commission and the parliamentary electoral matters committee. In relation to the second problem, it establishes that early voting has affected voter turnout in Australia in different ways. For NSW and Victorian state elections, early voting was negatively associated with the Resources model of voter turnout and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary education. It finds that iVote usage – NSW’s remote electronic voting system – was strongly positively associated with employment and tertiary education at the 2015 NSW state election. Findings for federal elections were less definitive. However, in all three jurisdictions there was a positive association between early voting and the closeness of the two candidate preferred early voting centre count.

This thesis makes two original contributions to the Australian electoral studies literature. Regarding the first research question, it finds that the early voting reforms in this thesis were adopted in a bipartisan way, and that electoral commissions and parliamentary electoral matters committees played a significant role in both the adoption and implementation of administrative reforms for voting at federal, NSW state and Victorian state elections. Regarding the second research question, it finds that early voting in Australia has stimulated turnout in some cases, but in others – such as NSW’s iVote – probably enabled convenience voting by electors already likely to vote. With continued postal service changes liable to increase demand for early voting, these findings have important implications for Australian electoral administration.
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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis concerns the growth of early voting in person, also known as pre-poll voting, at federal, New South Wales (NSW) and Victorian state elections from 2002 to 2015. Its central argument is twofold; firstly, the thesis finds that minor electoral reforms to early voting were shaped by a lack of direct partisan influence, the influence of the electoral commission and the parliamentary electoral matters committee. Secondly, the thesis also establishes that early voting has affected voter turnout in different ways at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections, but that in general, early voting is negatively associated with socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary education in the Resources model of voter participation.

While increasing early voting is a national and international trend (AEC 2014; Gronke et al 2007), early voting in these three Australian jurisdictions has grown substantially, with Victoria alone experiencing a 440 percent increase in early voting in person between the 1999 and 2014 Victorian state elections (from 164,000 early votes in 1999 to 890,000 early votes in 2014) (VEC 2014). Despite these figures, little is known about two aspects of Australia’s early voting phenomenon. In contrast to the United States (US) literature on electoral reform, there are few, if any, Australian-focused studies assessing what historical, contextual and institutional drivers have influenced minor electoral reforms to early voting procedures. From 2002 to 2015 access to early voting was liberalised for federal, NSW and Victorian state elections, and NSW introduced what is now the world’s largest remote voting system, iVote. In addition, we have a limited understanding of the impact that reforms increasing access to the ballot have had on voter turnout at Australian elections. While there is vast literature examining the impact of early voting on the composition of the US electorate (Burden et al 2012; Fullmer 2013; Alvarez et al 2012; Gronke et al 2007), and debate about whether early voting stimulates or suppresses participation, few studies in the Australian electoral literature have focused on the effects of early voting reform on turnout at Australian elections.

This chapter introduces the thesis. It first contextualises early voting in relation to the problem of declining voter turnout, explaining US and Australian perspectives and statistics for early voting at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections. It also discusses recent efforts to study electoral reforms expanding ballot access in the broader literature and Australia. It then defines key terms, outlines the thesis’ research design, research questions and methodologies and limitations of the thesis. The chapter concludes with justifications for the thesis and a chapter outline.
Background – declining turnout and early voting

Voting is one measure of citizen participation in electoral politics (IDEA 2016). Although forms of convenience voting have increased in the United States (US) (Fortier 2006, Alvarez et al 2012), Canada (Blais et al 2007: Garnett 2014), New Zealand (Elections New Zealand 2015, p.11) and Australia (Reader 2014b; Chen 2016), voter turnout in established democracies¹ is in decline. While there is some disagreement over the extent of these declines, as explored in Chapter Three, the consensus is that voter turnout and traditional forms of civic participation, such as joining a protest or attending church, have declined over the past 40 years (Niemi and Weisberg 1984; Putnam 2000; Thompson 2004). Of the developed democracies, the turnout decline has been most pronounced in the US. It is commonly reported that the US has one of the lowest turnout rates for periodic elections (Wolfinger 1980²; Patterson 2003), with turnout at presidential elections under 55 percent since the 1972 presidential election: for mid-term elections, 45 percent is the “norm” (Fullmer 2015, p.82).

These figures, alongside the electoral administration mishaps and controversy surrounding the 2000 US presidential election and the passage of the Help America Vote Act 2002, have driven efforts to understand low voter turnout, and measures to address it. The most common remedies are voter registration – registration is positively correlated in the electoral systems literature with increased turnout (Lijphart 1997) – civics and voting education and expanding access to the ballot, or early voting. This thesis is concerned with the third remedy in the Australian context. At the 2016 US general election early voting was available in 37 states, and the District of Columbia allowing any registered citizen to vote before Election Day at a location in their county (NCSL 2016)³. Statistically, early voting has increased from 10 percent of votes at the 1992 presidential election to 30 percent in 2008 and 2012, marking what Gronke and Miller (2012) called a “quiet revolution” in US electoral administration.

Australia

Like the US and other established democracies, turnout at Australian general elections is declining. While the aggregate turnout literature (Lijphart 1994; 1997) demonstrates that

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¹ In this thesis established democracies are those democracies defined by the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index as “full democracies” – the 2016 index identifies 19 full democracies (Economist 2016, p.3).
² Wolfinger (1980, p.2) reported that in 1976, only 54 percent of eligible Americans voted at the 1976 US presidential election. The voting age population method shows that 54.9 percent of Americans voted at the 2012 US presidential election.
³ Oregon (1998), Washington State (2011) and Colorado (2013) run elections exclusively by mail, or vote-by-mail.
compulsory voting increases turnout by roughly 10 percent, and that countries with preferential voting and compulsory voting routinely have higher voter turnout rates for periodic elections (IDEA 2017), Australia’s reputation for gold standard electoral outcomes is under threat (AEC 2014; VEC 2015). This thesis demonstrates that Australia has a tripartite participation problem: declining rates of voter turnout at periodic elections, falling electoral enrolment expressed as a percentage of the eligible voting population and increasing informal voting. Of the three indicators, the last two are being addressed. Australia’s electoral commissions have systematically researched informal voting, attempting to address its qualitative causes through education and community engagement; as noted by McAllister and Macca (1992), informal voting is the result of an interactive effect between the electoral system, social and cultural factors, including population growth, migration to Australia from non-English speaking countries and an increase in the number of candidates running for Australian Lower House elections (VEC 2015, p.11). At the systemic level, some jurisdictions, such as NSW and Queensland, have modified their voting systems to admit more votes to the count. Similarly, the failure of Australia’s electoral register to keep pace with population growth has been addressed federally, in NSW and Victoria by the introduction of direct electoral enrolment, although there still remain ‘pockets’ of under-enrolment amongst young people, minorities and Indigenous electors (JSCEM 2015, p.82).

Unlike informal voting and electoral enrolment though, there have been few systematic attempts to address declining turnout, notwithstanding specific institutional attempts to assist electors with particular needs to vote – the introduction of NSW’s iVote system in 2011 was designed, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, to assist vision-impaired electors and electors with disabilities to cast a secret ballot. This may be because of a relatively widespread critical assumption that Australia has effectively “solved” the turnout problem (Johnston and Forrest 2009, p.525; Louth and Hill 2005) if we measure Australia’s electoral performance using Lijphart’s (1994) and Johnston and Forrest’s (2009, p.525) measures. However, in recent

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4 Mid-way through this study the AEC also misplaced 1,370 votes at the 2013 federal election, necessitating an entire Senate re-election for Western Australia in 2014. Douglas (2015) documented the effect on the AEC’s prestige.

5 Hoffman and Lazaridis (2013) also discussed by-election turnout. The rate of turnout at Australian state by-elections has declined significantly as well.


7 Direct electoral enrolment, not be confused with automatic enrolment, is where an Australian electoral authority uses information held by it or partner agencies to enrol electors. Electors are usually sent a message via SMS notifying them that their details have changed and the electoral commission intends to update their enrolment accordingly. It is important to note that this regime is important in the Australian context given that Australia has had compulsory electoral enrolment since 1911 (Costar 2014) for federal elections. Electors are rarely prosecuted for failing to maintain their enrolment, however (Parliament of Victoria 2012).
times some of Australia’s electoral commissions, notably the AEC and the VEC, have attempted to draw legislative and public attention to an alternative, more nuanced position. As seen in table 1.1, turnout at the past six federal elections, and the past four NSW and Victorian state elections, has fallen in real terms. Turnout at the 2001 federal election of 94.85 percent was nearly five percent higher than the 2016 federal election of 90.8 percent. If turnout is calculated using the voting age population (VAP) measure, as Brent advocates (2008), not the eligible enrolled electors measure used by Australia’s electoral commissions, the median turnout rate for federal elections is actually closer to 80 percent. Declining voter turnout is also an issue at state elections, particularly at by-elections8 – in Victoria the 2012 Melbourne District by-election saw a record low 68.62 percent turnout rate, 19 percent lower than the turnout rate in Melbourne District at the 2010 Victorian state election.

Table 1.1: Voter turnout percentage at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections, 2001-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal elections</th>
<th>NSW state elections</th>
<th>Victorian state elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>94.85</td>
<td>93.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>94.32</td>
<td>92.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>94.76</td>
<td>92.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>93.22</td>
<td>90.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>93.22</td>
<td>93.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>90.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>


Early voting in Australia

However, not all forms of electoral participation have declined at Australian elections. As demonstrated in Figures 1.1 to 1.3, while ordinary voting and postal voting are declining relative to total voter turnout, early voting is increasing and has become the fastest growing form of electoral participation at Australian federal and most state elections (Reader 2014; Chen 2015). For federal elections, early voting increased 320 percent between the 2001 and 2013 federal elections (from 585,000 early votes in 2001 to 2,500,000 in 2013) (AEC 2016). In NSW, early voting increased 370 percent between the 2003 and 2015 NSW state elections (from 134,000 early votes in 2003 to 640,000 early votes in 2015), and in Victoria, as seen earlier, early voting increased dramatically at the past four Victorian state elections. The former NSW Electoral Commissioner, Colin Barry, has called early voting the “biggest

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8 The Victorian Electoral Commission has cautioned (2011; 2015) against using by-elections to extrapolate to wider turnout declines, as these contests are often affected by their proximity to other elections and several other factors (VEC 2015, p.27).
change in Australian electoral practice in 100 years” (NSW Electoral Commission 2016, p.11).

Although nearly a quarter of electors voted early at the 2013 federal election – and more than a third at the 2016 federal election (AEC 2016) – very little is known about the impact of early voting on voter turnout at Australian elections. There are only a few studies in this area (AEC 2014; Reader 2014; Smith 2016), despite an established interest in the demography and partisan influences of postal voting (Hughes 2001; AEC 2014; VEC 2013; Kelly 2012; Brent 2016). While it is tempting to attribute this lack of critical interest in early voting in Australia to the statement, noted above, that turnout is not an issue in Australia, it is not true to say that turnout at Australian elections is under-researched. There is a vast literature modelling the potential impact of removing compulsory voting (Jackman 1997; Mackerras and McAllister 1996; Aitken 1982; Healy and Warden 1995; Bean 1986). Thirty years of Australian Election Studies (AES) have developed a detailed profile of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the Australian voter (Bean and McAllister 2013; McAllister 2011). There is also research identifying new groups of non-voters (Hoffman and Laziridis 2013).

Accordingly, a more accurate explanation for the lack of interest in early voting in Australia – as this thesis will show – is that growth of flexible voting has largely gone unnoticed by those most closely connected to Australian electoral administration and electoral politics; Noah Carroll, State Secretary, Victorian Labor, told the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee in 2013 that early voting had “crept up” on many people in politics (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.44).

In contrast to Australia, there is a lively debate about the compositional effects of early voting and ‘convenience voting’ reforms in the US (Alvarez et al 2012; Burden et al 2012; Gronke 2008; Ashok et al 2016). The literature suggests that early voting reforms have mixed effects on voter turnout, notably who votes early. Berinsky (2005), Gronke et al (2007), Stein (1998) and Burden et al (2012) have demonstrated that early voting, implemented alone, does not necessarily increase voter turnout except in all-mail elections. Similarly, Berinsky (2005, p.473) sparked debate about the unintended consequences of early voting reform. While he, Gronke et al (2007) and Burden et al (2012) argued that early voting has merely exacerbated existing socio-economic biases in the electorate – those voting early are already voting and have the resources to do so – newer research from Alvarez et al (2012, p.248) found that early voting does not have partisan implications; Gronke and Stewart (2013) and Weaver (2015) reported that early voting reforms have stimulated minority and African American
Figures 1.1 to 1.3: Turnout types, federal, NSW and Victorian state elections 2001-2015

Figure 1.1: Federal elections - turnout type comparison

Voter turnout (raw figure) Ordinary voting Early voting in person Postal voting

Figure 1.2: NSW state elections - turnout type comparison

Voter turnout (raw figure) Ordinary voting Early voting in person Postal voting

Figure 1.3: Victorian state elections - turnout type comparison

Voter turnout (raw figure) Ordinary voting Early voting in person Postal voting

Sources: AEC 2014; AEC 2016; Parliament of Australia 2015, p.78; NSW Electoral Commission 2015, p.12; VEC 2015, p.11.
turnout respectively at the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. In short, does early voting stimulate turnout, and if so, who is stimulated – those already likely to vote, or constituencies who traditionally experience challenges voting? This thesis directly addresses this gap in the Australian electoral knowledge.

**Major and minor electoral reform – the case for studying electoral administration**

Electoral reform has traditionally been associated with electoral system reform involving changes in the rules governing the allocation of seats in a parliament (Lijphart 1994), such as the shift from majoritarian voting to proportional representation. Implicitly, comparative studies of electoral reform (Renwick 2010; Lijphart 1994; 1997; Norris 1995) have assumed that electoral system reform therefore involves wholesale change; several scholars (Katz 1980; Katz 2005; Cox 1997; Renwick 2010) argued that ‘major’ electoral reform – involving explicit modifications to electoral systems – is a rare event, particularly in established democracies. For instance, Katz pinpointed twelve incidences of major electoral reform from 1945 to 1999 (2005, p.32); in *The Politics of Electoral Reform*, Renwick suggested 60 (Renwick 2010).

However, this thesis argues that reform is more prevalent. As noted by the ACE Project, “electoral reform often only catches the public eye when it involves changes to representational arrangements, such as electoral systems, but it is a much broader concept than this” (ACE Project 2016, p.1). If we extend the definition of electoral reform to encompass changes in electoral rules (Farrell 2001, p.2; Massicotte et al 2004), such as expanding access to the ballot via early voting reforms, then electoral reform is much more prevalent than traditional rational choice studies presuppose. In addition, electoral reform can also happen at the sub-national (provincial and local government) level. Another important qualifier is that electoral reforms are not always successful (Renwick 2010). Grouping together cases of successful and unsuccessful reform, Qvortrup reported over 80 incidences of electoral reform in established democracies from 1980 to 2010 (Bowler and Donovan 2013, p.8).

Expanding the definition of electoral reform to include apparently minor reform raises several questions. Do extant approaches for explaining electoral reform apply to minor reforms, given that the barriers to minor reform are theoretically lower (Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011)? As we shall see in Chapter Two, there is a lively debate in the electoral reform literature about methodological approaches. The efficacy of prevailing rational choice theories, which
place great importance on the role of partisan self-interest in electoral reform (Benoit 2004; Renwick 2010; Cox 1997), has been challenged by the emergence of historical comparative (Rahat and Hazan 2011, p.479; Norris 1995; 2005; 2009) studies of electoral reform. These studies integrate analysis of the role of partisans in the electoral reform process alongside historical, institutional and cultural developments, accounting for the role of path dependence in institutional design and the capacity for non-partisan actors, such as the legal system, to influence reform processes (Renwick 2010). Does either approach completely explain reform? Can we adapt tools for assessing major reform for minor reform? Put simply, while we know a lot about electoral system reform (Norris 2009; Rahat 2010; Renwick 2010; Katz 2007), we know less about what changes electoral rules (Farrell 2001; Massicotte et al 2004), and minor and technical electoral reforms (Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011; Rahat 2011).

While studies of major reform are prevalent in the literature, there is a growing interest in international electoral administration reform, including changes to voting procedures and the historical, contextual and institutional factors influencing how these reforms were adopted and implemented. In the US, there is a substantial literature assessing the ramifications of partisan interests to restrict access to absentee and early voting services in Ohio, Florida and North Carolina (Brennan Centre 2016, p.1; Gronke and Stewart 2013). Several scholars have also attempted to document what factors contributed to the development of convenience voting laws; Biggers and Hanmer (2015, p.204) demonstrated how the first, state-level efforts to implement early voting laws in the US, such as in Texas and Ohio in the 1990s, were not marked by partisan self-interest. But they found that policy implementation has been subject to politics. Similarly, Fortier (2006) explored the contextual boundaries of partisan debates in the US about early voting; more recently, Fullmer (2013) offered a more comprehensive treatment. Elsewhere, in the United Kingdom James (2013) studied how political elites manipulate electoral administration rules, and the interactive effects between this process and electoral reform.

There is considerable interest in Australian electoral reform but only very recent interest in changes to voting procedures, mostly focused on NSW’s adoption of remote electronic voting (Smith 2016). There is a vast Australian scholarship on systemic reform, such as the development of preferential voting after Federation (Farrell and McAllister 2006; Costar and Hughes 2006; Kelly 2008; McAllister 2011), recent attempts to amend Senate voting rules (Economou 2016; Costar 2014), the efficacy of compulsory voting (Louth and Hill 2005; Fowler 2013; Farrell and McAllister 2006), as well as state-level system reforms, including
the introduction of proportional representation in Victoria in 2002 (Costar 2002; Parliament of Victoria 2015) and electoral reform in South Australia (Blewett and Jaesch 1971). In the late 2000s the introduction of direct electoral enrolment – when an electoral commission uses information it or a related government agency holds to automatically update an elector’s details on the electoral register – several studies have examined how and why these reforms were implemented (Hoffman and Brent 2011) and their partisan implications (Brent and Jackman 2007). However, echoing the international literature, the study of minor reforms to voting procedures in Australia is underdeveloped; as noted by Farrell and McAllister (2006, p.169):

For the most part, changes to electoral system (in Australia) were very small (although certainly no so in 1918 and 1948). But even if this is so, the Australian case does suggest a need to take great account of the true extent of minor changes. Taken together over time, they can amount to a significant trend (for example, rules regarding the minimum number of preferences, the move towards grouping of candidates on the ballot paper and, ultimately, the adoption of ticket voting). And, on occasions...even seemingly minor changes can produce quite significant results – for example, the adaptation to the Gregory method for transferring votes surpluses...can materially affect the electoral fate of candidates.

To take a true “account”, to paraphrase Farrell and McAllister, of the full extent of minor and technical changes to Australia’s early voting practices, it is necessary to assess the role of two unique components of Australia’s electoral system; the role of Australia’s independent electoral commissions and parliamentary electoral matters committees. The three jurisdictions in this thesis are the only Australian jurisdictions to have a dedicated parliamentary electoral matters committee – the Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM), the NSW JSCEM and the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee. To what extent do these committees influence administrative reform? Some scholars have suggested they play little role in electoral reform (Kelly 2008, p.55; Brent 2016), while others have suggested that these committees can assist parliaments and policymakers to build a case and promulgate acceptance for complex electoral reforms (Russell and Benton 2011; Reader 2014a). Any assessment of Australia’s early voting reforms must include analysis of these committees, given that electoral policymaking is tightly controlled by parliaments (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.2) and these committees offer a unique, direct path for the public to contribute to discussions about electoral rules.
Further, what influence have Australia’s independent electoral commissions had on electoral administration reform, and specifically, early voting reform? Australia’s electoral management bodies are widely regarded as the ‘gold standard’ for international electoral administration (ACE Project 2016). This thesis will show that the AEC, the NSW Electoral Commission and the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) influenced minor reforms to early voting procedures to differing extents. Assessing and analysing how Australia’s electoral commissions contribute to electoral rule making (Tham 2013, p.11) is another central question in this thesis, as is whether this function compromises their neutrality\(^9\) (Hughes 2000).

In summary, this thesis explores why, between 2002 and 2015, three Australian jurisdictions introduced minor electoral reforms to voting procedures, which resulted in broadly liberalised access to early voting at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections. Further, how might we assess these reforms using extant frameworks in the minor and technical reform literature given that certain aspects of Australia’s electoral system, notably its parliamentary electoral matters and electoral commissions, are quite different to similar institutions elsewhere? Understanding the drivers of these reforms, and the potential interplay between these drivers and jurisdiction-specific effects on voter turnout, is an important contribution to Australian electoral studies.

**Definitions**

*Early voting*

It is important to define the phenomenon this thesis studies, given there are different definitions of early voting in Australia and internationally. For the purposes of this thesis, early voting is the act of casting a vote in person before Election Day, in the legislatively allocated early voting period. For the sake of clarity, the thesis uses the term ‘early voting’ instead of ‘early voting in person’ throughout the thesis. Several electoral commissions, including the NSW Electoral Commission and the Electoral Commission of Queensland, refer to early voting as ‘pre-poll voting’. This term is also widely used by psephologists to refer to voting before Election Day in the Australian context. However, this thesis settles on ‘early voting’; occasionally, it also uses ‘early voting in person’ if this makes the text clearer.

\(^9\) It is important to note at this point that Australia’s electoral administration is a bureaucratic system, not a political system like in the US where electoral administrators are usually appointed by a legislature and have a party affiliation. The Australian, NSW and Victorian electoral commissioners are all independent, statutory officers of their respective parliaments, and are required by legislation to remain impartial in the discharge of their chief duty of running elections.
Some variations to this definition occur in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight. Chapters Five and Six assess reforms to early voting procedures at federal elections. Since 2010 there have been two different categories of early votes for federal elections; pre-poll ordinary votes, which are early votes cast inside an elector’s Home Division\(^{10}\), and pre-poll declaration votes, which are early votes cast outside an elector’s Home Division. As we shall see in Chapter Five, this administrative delineation followed concern about the potential for a high number of early votes to delay an Election Night count; prior to the delineation all early votes were counted after Election Day. In these chapters then, ‘pre-poll voting’ is used occasionally instead of ‘early voting’.

Further, Chapters Seven and Eight also study iVote. Introduced in 2011, iVote is NSW’s remote voting system. Chapter Seven discusses two reforms to early voting practice, one affecting early voting, the other establishing the enabling legislation for iVote. The reasons for including iVote as a mode of early voting are noted shortly, and in Chapter Eight.

As we shall see in Chapters Five, Seven and Nine, early voting is a relatively recent electoral reform. It can be traced to the AEC’s practice of issuing ‘oral declaration’ votes at Divisional electorate offices, which first began in the 1980s (AEC 2014; Reader 2015, p.4; Parliament of Victoria 2016, p.24). NSW and Victoria followed a similar practice throughout the 1990s. At the federal level, the practice of issuing pre-poll votes was later formalised following an amendment to *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cwth) by the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment Act 1989* (Cwth) (Hughes 2002, p.219), and again in 1993. In NSW, the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (NSW) was reformed throughout the 2000s, formalising arrangements for early voting. In Victoria, the provision for early voting at early voting centres was formally adopted in 2002 following a comprehensive overhaul of Victoria’s electoral legislation in 2002, with the passage of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic).

Conceptually, early voting is no different to ordinary voting. Administratively however, early voting is different to ordinary voting in three key ways, as shown in table 1.2. Specifically:

- **Timeline**: Early voting occurs before Election Day in the allocated early voting period prescribed by legislation. The early voting period is different for federal, NSW and Victorian state general elections. For federal elections, since 2010 early voting

\(^{10}\) A Division is the title for one of the 150 electorates in the Australian House of Representatives.
has been permitted 19\textsuperscript{11} days before Election Day. In NSW and Victoria, early voting is permitted two and a half weeks before Election Day. For by-elections there have been instances where a longer early voting period has been used. Three of the past five Victorian state by-elections for the Legislative Assembly have had an early voting period of four weeks; in Victoria the length of the early voting period for by-elections is determined by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Parliament of Victoria 2015);

- **Early voting centres**: In Australia early voting centres also have different locations to Election Day centres. Many Australians associate Election Day with schools, churches and other community centres, having voted in such facilities their entire adult lives (Orr 2014). In contrast, early voting centres are often located in commercial premises and the electoral commission’s District electorate office, as traditional venues like schools are often unavailable during the week due to cost pressures associated with securing ‘high visibility’ locations; and

- **Criteria**: While any eligible elector may present to vote and cast a vote on Election Day, there are specific criteria for early voting at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections. As we shall see in Chapters Five, Seven and Nine, the criteria for early voting at federal, NSW and Victorian elections have been modified significantly since 2002. For federal elections, there are ten criteria – based on postal voting criteria – for early voting. However, AEC officials at early voting centres are only required to ask electors “Are you unable to vote on Election Day”? No proof is required, therefore early voting at federal elections is governed by an ‘honour’ system. In NSW, the _Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Bill 2006_ (NSW) removed the former dual declaration for early voting and replaced it with an oral declaration. In Victoria, the _Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005_ (Vic) also inserted an oral declaration into the _Electoral Act 2002_ (Vic); as shown in Chapter Nine, this provision was the subject of an unsuccessful and controversial legal challenge by a former Palmer United Candidate to the 2014 Victorian state election. Studying these amendments is a key component of the assessment framework.

\textsuperscript{11} The reason why early voting is permitted for 19 days before a federal election concerns ballot paper printing. Candidate nominations usually close on a Friday. With the increase in early voting, Australian electoral commissions found that a large number of electors would present to vote just after the close of nominations at early voting centres, and would insist on voting despite ballot papers not being available. Accordingly, the AEC and the VEC have since 2010 withheld early voting until the Monday following the close of nominations to allow ballot papers to be printed over the weekend.
**Why not postal voting?**

In contrast to early voting, postal voting is the oldest form of convenience voting in Australia. It has been available since colonial elections (Brent 2008; Sawer 2001) and is relied upon by many rural and regional electors. However, this thesis does not analyse postal voting. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, as shown in table 1.1, the growth of early voting has outstripped postal voting at the past three federal elections. A similar trend occurred in NSW and Victoria. So to the extent that early voting is increasing, postal votes have remained stable or declined. Secondly, the capacity of Australian electoral commissions to provide postal voting services is currently under threat due to service changes at Australia Post. In 2015 Australia Post introduced a two-tiered regular mail system, migrating its formerly daily mail service to a three-times a week service (ABC 2015). Consequently, several Australian electoral commissions have indicated that it will become much harder to administer postal votes. Irregular mail service means that many electors will not be able to receive, complete and send back a postal ballot application within the prescribed timelines. Accordingly, some commissions have advised that postal voting may not be viable in the medium term (VEC 2015, p.7). Secondly, as noted, the literature has assessed the impact of postal voting on turnout, particularly in the US, where some states, including Oregon, conduct elections entirely by-mail (Berinsky et al 2007; Gronke et al 2008; Qvortrup 2008), as well as in Australia (Hughes 2001; AEC 2014; Kelly 2012, p.131; Orr 2015). In contrast, early voting in person in Australia has not been studied.

A note about electoral reform

As noted earlier electoral reforms happen regularly and rarely involve major system reform (Renwick 2010). However, just like major reforms, minor electoral reforms, including those to electoral administration, should *improve* electoral processes, not impede them (ACE 2016, p.2). Based on this premise, this thesis asks; to what extent have Australia’s early voting reforms improved Australia’s electoral system and administration? Who have the reforms benefited? Quantitatively, have reforms making it easier to vote early increased turnout by electors from socio-economic backgrounds who, despite compulsory voting, might not vote?
## Table 1.2: Eligibility requirements, early voting, federal, NSW and Victorian elections (July 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Eligibility requirements and implementation</th>
<th>Legislative instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>To be eligible an elector may be:</td>
<td>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cwth), Part XVA, Divisions Three and Four.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• outside the electorate where they are enrolled to vote;</td>
<td>Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Regulations 2010 (Cwth).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• more than 8km from a polling place;</td>
<td>Note: As a result of legislative amendments in 2010 there are two categories of early votes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• travelling;</td>
<td>Pre-poll ‘Ordinary’ votes are cast by an elector in their Home Division. Pre-poll ‘Declaration’ votes are effectively absentee votes and are cast outside an elector’s Home Division.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• unable to leave their workplace to vote;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• seriously ill, infirm or due to give birth shortly (or caring for someone who is);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a patient in hospital and can't vote at the hospital;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have religious beliefs that prevent them from attending a polling place;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• in prison serving a sentence of less than three years or otherwise detained;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a silent elector; or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a reasonable fear for their safety.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation: AEC officials are required to ask electors “Are you unable to vote on Election Day”? Burden of proof is thus an ‘honour’ system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Early voting in person</td>
<td>Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 (NSW), Division 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical centres are asked to declare whether they are unable to vote on Election Day. If yes, proceed to vote.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iVote</td>
<td>At the 2015 NSW state election electors had to meet one of the following criteria to use iVote;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• be blind or have low vision;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have a physical disability;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have a literacy issue or insufficient language skills;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• be more than 20km from a polling place;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• outside NSW on Election Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In practice in 2015, iVote’s registration system relied on a self-report declaration system, as discussed in Chapter Eight.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Electors presenting at an early voting centre must make an oral declaration as to their eligibility.</td>
<td>Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), section 98. Amended to current criteria in August 2005 by Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation: VEC officials are required to ask “Are you unable to vote on Election Day”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cwth); Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 (NSW); Electoral Act 2002 (Vic).
Research design, research questions and methodologies

Research design

This thesis uses a mixed-methods research design. Mixed methods designs use qualitative and quantitative data in a single research project. Specifically, the thesis uses a sequential exploratory research design (Creswell 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark 2007, p.85). In essence, this means that the qualitative research phase informs the second, quantitative research phase, although the order of the phases, and how the results and methodologies are ‘mixed’, is not necessarily structured and happens intuitively based on the researcher’s understanding of the data (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick 2006, p.3). Chapter Four explains the exploratory design. Suffice to say, there are good reasons for using a mixed-methods design. Creswell (2003) reported that the sequential exploratory approach is useful when exploring a new and emerging phenomenon. This is certainly the case for early voting in Australia. While we know that early voting turnout has increased at federal, NSW and Victorian elections, there is little understanding about the key drivers of Australia’s early voting reforms, or the impact of these reforms on voter turnout. Extant theories of voter turnout provide a framework for the multivariate models developed in Chapter Three but the findings from the assessment framework enrich and provide important contextual insight into each variable. By merging the two phases, the thesis develops a holistic picture of early voting in the three jurisdictions by analysing the drivers of reform and using this information to inform the estimates of the District-level compositional effects of early voting reforms on voter turnout.

Research questions and methodologies

This thesis has two primary research questions. The first is:

To what extent can we assess and explain the historical, contextual and institutional factors behind early voting reforms for federal, New South Wales and Victorian state elections from 2002 to 2015?

To answer this question, the thesis develops an assessment framework for analysing Australian electoral administration reform. The framework adapts Rahat and Hazan’s ‘barriers to reform’ (2011) model and Norris’ policy cycle model (2009; 2011). Referring to Yin’s (2003) case study analysis techniques, the thesis answers this question through analysis of case studies of six minor legislative reforms; two for federal elections, two for NSW state
elections and two for Victorian state elections. Evidence is drawn from primary sources, including parliamentary committee reports, parliamentary debates (Hansard), electoral commission technical literature and voting manuals, as well as secondary research into Australian electoral reform and some archival research.

The qualitative findings are also enhanced by data from 20 semi-structured ‘elite’ interviews, involving members of Parliament who have sat on either the Commonwealth JSCEM, the NSW JSCEM or the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee, and senior electoral officials. While Chapter Four discusses the interview process further, at this point it is important to note that the interviews serve a key function. As established, the thesis’ first research question is about assessing and explaining minor electoral reform. The views of policymakers – those who pass legislation setting electoral rules – and electoral officials, those who implement legislation (and sometimes make electoral rules), offer insights that documentary research cannot. Australia’s electoral commissions also establish electoral rules governing early voting, such as the location of early voting centres and their functions.

The thesis’ second research question is:

*To what extent have Australia’s early voting reforms impacted voter turnout at federal, NSW and Victoria state elections from 2002 to 2015?*

The Resources model of voter participation (Downs 1957, p.p.14-18) posits that electoral participation is positively associated with the resources a person has, such as age and education. The US literature has shown, for the most part, that early voting reforms have merely exacerbated existing socio-economic biases in the electorate (Burden et al 2012). In Australia however, Lijphart (1999) suggests that compulsory voting ‘irons out’ the turnout profile, drawing in more electors than non-mandatory voting. Accordingly, we might expect minor electoral reforms designed to make it easier to vote early should theoretically stimulate electors who typically have fewer resources to vote. In short, the sub-question here is; what are the District-level estimates of the relationship between early voting and socio-economic status?

To answer this question, the thesis uses multivariate analysis to estimate the District-level relationship between early voting and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary education at 10 general elections. The relationship between electoral participation and education is one of the most robust in empirical political science (Geys 2005, p.644). Chapter
Three establishes why we should use employment as a resource measure of electoral participation. The elections studied are the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections, the 2007, 2011, 2015 NSW elections and 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections. Using ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions, the thesis regresses the dependent variable against four models of voter turnout – the Resources model, the Social-Cultural model, the Political model and the Electoral / Institutional model of voter turnout. Chapter Three establishes the theory for the models; Chapter Four operationalises the models.

Chapters Eight and Ten also feature two further empirical studies. Chapter Eight estimates the District-level relationship between iVote turnout and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary education at the 2015 NSW state election. The aim of this test is to provide a counterpoint to the model findings for early voting at NSW state elections; as shown in Chapter Eight, there is an ‘in person’ dimension to the iVote. Further, the extant electronic voting literature has shown that early stage remote voting systems, such as Estonia’s remote voting system, tend to be used by individuals from higher-resource backgrounds (Estonian National Electoral Committee 2016, p.167). There is also an association in the literature between other markers of higher resources, such as internet literacy and wealth, and electronic voting (Alvarez et al 2008). This is one of the first attempts to assess quantitatively the compositional effects of NSW’s iVote reforms in the literature.

Chapter Ten also uses unique, individual-level data to augment District-level findings for the 2010 Victorian state election. In 2014 the VEC provided a complete, de-identified log of the 2010 Victorian electoral roll. The data file contains individual-level information about the 520,000 early votes cast at the 2010 Victorian state election, including time of vote, the elector’s age, sex and information about their enrolled District and where they voted early. Chapter Ten performs multiple logistic regression analysis to estimate coefficients regarding the associations between age and the likelihood of vote choice, as well as descriptive statistics showing the times people voted. These individual-level insights enhance the aggregate-level findings and are a first in Australian electoral studies.

With two methodologies, the thesis’ literature review is divided into two chapters. Chapter Two situates the thesis’ first research question in the electoral systems and electoral reform literatures. Chapter Three situates the thesis’ second research question in the voter turnout and early voting literatures.
Justification for research

Beyond the original contributions to the electoral reform and voter turnout literatures discussed above, this thesis makes an original contribution to contemporary knowledge about Australian electoral administration policy and practice. There is no doubt that early voting, and the rise of electronic voting, present significant challenges for Australia’s electoral administration. It is highly likely that there will be an Australian general election at the federal or state level, in one or two election cycles, where the majority of electors (including postal voters) vote before Election Day. Notwithstanding Orr’s (2014, p.151) commentary around these matters, Australian electoral commissions and policymakers have only just begun to debate what this means for the administrative concept of a single, Election Day, certainly compared to their US counterparts. This is discussed further in the Conclusion.

The introduction of remote voting in NSW in 2011 has raised the real possibility that remote voting will augment, or even replace, in person voting at Australian elections in the not too distant future. The NSW Electoral Commission has noted that iVote is not intended to be a replacement for paper-based voting (NSW Electoral Commission 2015). However, following regulatory amendments in 2012 expanding the criteria for iVote to electors outside NSW, iVote grew 505 percent (over 280,000 iVotes) at the 2015 NSW state election. The NSW JSCEM has also recently considered whether to expand access to iVote for the 2019 NSW state election. Given that evidence from Estonia shows that a restricted electronic voting franchise often leads to exaggerated turnout profiles favouring the resource rich (Bochsler 2010), this research has important implications.

With the AEC and the VEC recently discontinuing Election Night tally rooms, the character of Election Day has changed significantly in recent years, particularly around the reporting of results. With the 2016 federal election result delayed by the substantial number of early (pre-poll declaration) votes (Raue 2016), it appears as if the federal Parliament’s 2010 legislative amendments to ensure that a large early vote would not delay an election count have not gone far enough (JSCEM 2011). The Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee and the VEC supported amending counting early votes on Election Night in early 2015 (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.5).

This thesis also draws critical attention to the ongoing process of Australian electoral reform. Electoral reform is a continuous process. In 2016 alone the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly introduced optional preferential voting for the 2016 Northern Territory election,

**Delimitations**

As seen earlier in table 1.1, increased early voting is a national trend effecting all Australian elections. Why does the thesis focus specifically on 10 general elections at the federal level, NSW and Victoria?

The first answer is data availability. Unlike the US, where electoral data is easily available at the individual level and there is a traditional of empirical electoral studies, the data sources for this thesis were limited. Australia’s electoral commissions vary in size and many, such as the Northern Territory Electoral Commission and the Australian Capital Territorty (ACT) Electoral Commission, have just a few permanent staff and little capacity to collect and collate voting records, or perform secondary analysis or research into voting trends (NTEC 2013, p.2). To this extent, there were some inconsistencies between jurisdictions in data availability. Part of the reason the thesis focuses on federal, NSW and Victorian elections is that AEC, NSW Electoral Commission and VEC were / are well-resourced and available to assist with data inquiries. Senior officials were also willing to participate in the interview program.

The thesis is also limited by time period. As noted earlier, early voting was formalised for federal elections in the early 1990s; early voting has also been unofficially available since the late 1980s. However, as seen in Figures 1.1 to 1.3, the rate of early voting increased markedly around 2002. This year then seems a natural cut-off point for the study, as does 2015; the 2014 Victorian state election and the 2015 NSW state election occurred within six months of each other.

In addition to jurisdictions with well-resourced electoral commissions, the thesis is also limited to jurisdictions that have a dedicated parliamentary electoral matters committee, as noted earlier. ‘Dedicated’ is the operative term in this context. For instance, the Queensland Parliament also has a tradition of conducting parliamentary inquiries into electoral matters.
through the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. That committee recently inquired into expanding the size of the Legislative Assembly from 89 to 93 members, as well as the case for fixed, four-year terms for the Queensland Parliament (passed by referendum in March 2016). Nevertheless, the committee is dissimilar to its federal, NSW and Victorian counterparts as it also examines community and legal matters, and so is not permanently answerable to the Parliament in relation to electoral matters. South Australia also has a standing committee on electoral matters. But the committee is relatively new and debate continues about the committee’s ongoing role (Newton-Farrelly 2015). Practically, evaluating the role of Australia’s electoral commissions in early voting reforms is an important part of the assessment framework. Hence, this thesis is limited to those jurisdictions with a history of parliamentary review of electoral administration. Further, in contrast to Queensland and South Australia, the dedicated, ongoing committees have also inquired into the rise of early voting on numerous occasions (JSCEM 2008; 2011; Parliament of Victoria 2012; 2015; 2017).

**Thesis outline**

This thesis is organised into eleven chapters including this Introduction.

Chapter Two situates the thesis’ first research question in the electoral systems and electoral reform literatures. It examines debates in the literature around ‘major’ and ‘minor’ electoral reform and reviews arguments the concerning most common theoretical explanations for electoral reform, establishing that the historical comparative approach offers greater potential to assess minor and technical electoral reforms like early voting. It then reviews the literature proposing explanations for early voting reforms in the US, and examines how we might assess and explain Australia’s early voting reforms based on previous attempts to explain Australian administrative electoral reforms, such as direct enrolment. The chapter also reviews literature on the functions of Australia’s electoral commissions, and the emerging literature reviewing the performance of Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees.

Chapter Three situates the thesis’ second research question in the voter turnout literature. The chapter contextualises the problem of electoral participation, examining the reasons why voting is important and reviewing the literature suggesting that voter turnout has declined both in Australia and established democracies. The chapter also examines why people vote, and four models of turnout – the Resources model, the Social-Cultural model, the Political
model and the Electoral / Institutional model. It also reviews the early voting literature, including the debate around the compositional effects of early voting, demonstrating critical gaps in the Australian literature.

Chapter Four describes the thesis’ mixed-methods research design and qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It operationalises the assessment framework for Australia’s early voting reforms, and examines the four models of voter turnout used in Chapters Six, Eight and Ten to estimate Division and District-level associations between early voting and socio-economic variables. The chapter also describes the thesis’ semi-structured interview program. As noted earlier, Chapter Four operationalises the voter turnout models theorised in Chapter Three. The reason why these two functions are separated is to assist with the narrative flow of the thesis.

Chapter Five uses the assessment framework to assess two minor reforms to early voting procedures for federal elections.

Chapter Six uses the voter turnout models to assess the impact of early voting on voter turnout at the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections.

Chapter Seven uses the assessment framework to assess two minor reforms to early voting procedures for NSW state elections, including the 2011 introduction of NSW’s iVote remote voting system.

Chapter Eight uses the voter turnout models to assess the impact of early voting on voter turnout at the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections. It also regresses iVote against the voter turnout models to assess quantitatively the compositional effects of NSW’s iVote reforms.

Chapter Nine uses the assessment framework to assess two minor reforms to early voting procedures for Victorian state elections.

Chapter Ten uses the voter turnout models to assess the impact of early voting on voter turnout at the 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections. It also offers individual-level empirical insights to compliment the turnout model findings using electoral roll data from the 2010 Victorian state election.

The thesis’ final chapter, Chapter Eleven, summarises the major contributions to knowledge, focusing on conclusions about the thesis’ two major research questions. It then addresses the
implications of these findings for theories of electoral reform for the thesis’ first research question, and theories of voter turnout and early voting for the second research question. The chapter also discusses the limitations of this study, implications of the thesis’ findings for public policy and electoral administration and suggestions for further research into early voting.
Chapter Two: Explaining and assessing electoral reform

This chapter situates the thesis’ first research question within the electoral systems and electoral reform literature. It explores why electoral systems matter, reviewing debates about ‘major’ and ‘minor’ electoral reform and how the existing literature explains stability, and change, in electoral institutions. It establishes that a multi-paradigmatic approach offers more flexibility for assessment of minor and technical electoral reforms than the rational choice or historical comparative approaches. The chapter also reviews the extant literature on US early voting reforms, and Australian approaches to electoral reform. It also reviews the elite statecraft literature, which offers insights into how elites might manipulate electoral rules. The chapter concludes by reviewing the literature about Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees and Australia’s electoral commissions, theorising their influence on electoral reform.

What is an electoral system?

Following Duverger (1954) and Rae (1967), the relevant literature has classified the main types of electoral systems and analysed their consequences (Norris 2009, p.4, Lijphart 1997; Lijphart and Grofman 1984; Blais and Massicote 1996; Bogdanor and Butler 1983; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Farrell 2001; Cox 1997). Gallagher and Mitchell (2005, p.3) defined an electoral system as “the set of rules that structure how votes are cast at elections for a representative assembly and how these votes are then converted into seats in that assembly. Given a set of votes, an electoral system determines the composition of the parliament (or assembly, council, and so on as the case may be)”. Others offer a similar, rule-based view. O’Neal (1993) observed that electoral systems have a dramatic impact on the ‘political’ nature of a society. Political parties and candidates are conditioned by electoral rules, and their behaviour will change and adapt to the rules of the electoral system (O’Neal 1993, p.2).

At the risk of oversimplification, the major, theoretical debate in the literature has concerned the method of translating votes into seats, or the electoral formula. Do political parties define the structure of the electoral system, or does the system influence political parties? As defined by Riker (1982, p.752), Duverger (1951) contended that party systems are shaped by the electoral institutions in which they act. Hence, Duverger’s law, that majoritarian, single-member voting systems create two-party systems, while proportional systems with multi-
member electorates produce multi-party systems. Riker’s conditioning of Duverger’s theories is important: Riker (1982: 754) distinguished between Duverger’s Law, that links the simple-majority single-ballot formulas and the two-party systems, and Duverger’s Hypothesis, that associates simple-majority systems with second ballot and proportional representation to multi-partyism. He also noted that Duverger was probably not the first person to theorise party influence, but probably the “first to dare to call it a law” (Riker 1982. p.754).

Perhaps the most well-known macro-level study is Lijphart’s seminal work Electoral Systems and Party Systems (1994). According to Lijphart, electoral systems vary according to five key properties:

- Electoral formula, (1) Majoritarian (plurality/majority) and (2) proportional representation (different forms of proportional representation);
- District Magnitude;
- Electoral Threshold;
- Assembly size, including the concept of average magnitude; and
- Ancillary properties, including ballot structure, malapportionment, presidentialism and apparentement.

There is a wide literature on Duverger’s rule and how it works to usually advantage large parties (Rae 1969; Taagapera and Shugart 1989; Benoit 2004; McDonald 2009). As noted by Shugart (2005, p.30), there is a mechanical (marco) and psychological (micro) dimension to Duverger’s research. The mechanical dimension involves converting votes into seats. According to Taagepera and Shugart (1989) the number of parties is a function both of dimensions in an interactive sense. As summarised by Shugart (2005, p.31), “when there are few issues, the number of parties does not rise with magnitude, but when there are many issues, the effect of magnitude is felt more strongly: low district magnitude—including single-seat districts—has a reductive effect”. Expressed another way, single member district elections will see small parties effectively squeezed out of existence because the system denies them seats.

The micro, psychological effects of Duverger’s thesis relate to the reaction of “instrumentally minded voters and elites to the expected working of the electoral system” (Grofman et al 2009, p.2). Cox’s (1997) work in this area is arguably the most sophisticated. Demonstrating the limits of Duverger’s law, Cox demonstrated a case for strategic coordination. Take, for
example, a single member plurality election in which two left and two right candidates stand. If the left candidates were to coordinate to organise one to withdraw, the other would have a larger chance of winning. How and when does this coordination occur, and when does it succeed? These questions are central to Cox’s work. He viewed electoral laws as a series of coordination issues that political actors must circumvent or solve. Using a game-theoretic model to study coordination comparatively, Cox found, at the district level, that voters support a maximum of $M+1$ candidate (Cox 1997, p.271). $M$ refers to the number of candidates in a district (unless in a single member dual-ballot system). Others have also demonstrated strategic voting in plurality elections (Abramson et al 1992; Alvarez et al 2004).

In contrast to Duverger, another perspective on the party-centric conception of electoral systems is the view that governing parties shape electoral institutions. Rokkan (1970) first developed these ideas, citing the example of Western Europe in the 20th century when political parties and groups introduced proportional representation to ensure their own survival against the rise of left-wing labour groups (Rokkan 1970; Benoit 2004, p.364). Conceptualised this way, there is an inherent tension between electoral systems and political systems, with each attempting to mould the other until equilibrium is reached. Reviewing Rokkan, Benoit (2004) described the ongoing tensions between electoral institutions and parties – democratic stability is determined by how the equilibrium is managed. Similarly, Colomer (2005) argued that political parties determine the structure of democratic stability.

“Electoral systems matter”

Or so wrote Gallagher and Mitchell (2005) in The Politics of Electoral Reform. There are a number of reasons why the study of electoral systems is important. A common theme is the link between electoral systems and democratic legitimacy. Gallagher and Mitchell (2005, p.3) found that “they are a crucial link in the chain connecting the preferences of citizens to the policy choices made by governments. They are chosen by political actors and, once in existence, have political consequences for those actors. They are an important object of study for anyone interested in the political process”. Similarly, Taagepera (2000, p.1) argued that electoral systems consist not only of rules but the way in which these rules influence the democratic culture; “This culture includes informed self-interest, meaning some concern for stability and tradition, and avoidance of gross miscalculations resulting from limited
understanding of the effect of given electoral rules. Such experience comes with time. A stable electoral system consists of electoral rules that have withstood the test of time.\(^\text{12}\)

In contrast, others have theorised the relationship between electoral systems and political systems (Farrell 2001; Colomer 2004; Renwick 2010). Electoral systems produce the outcomes that are the foundation of democratic politics – the election of citizens to the representative institution. As noted by Farrell (2001, p.158), “electoral systems have consequences for the political systems in which they operate”. Similarly, Rae (1967) summarised that electoral systems have ‘proximal’, or short term, and ‘distil’, or long term affects. Depending on how the system is designed also determines whether a particular party is represented in a legislature, whether a politician is elected or whether government wins enough seats to form power.

There is also the counterfactual argument – what would happen if a country had another type of electoral system? On the negative side, Farrell (2001, p.1) somewhat facetiously questioned how many wars were fought about whether the electoral system was “largest remainder” or “highest average”?\(^\text{13}\) In contrast, others have suggested a more positive view. Using the example of Britain’s decision to commit troops to the first Iraq war in 2003, Renwick (2010, p.4) argued that the deployment might never have happened if Britain had a proportional representation system. At the 1997 and 2001 UK general elections the Blair government only received 41 and 43 percent of the vote respectively. In less consequential circumstances, many Australians were recently alerted to the so-called “gaming” of the Upper House voting system (Economou 2016, p.1; Costar 2014, p.157) by minor parties. At the 2013 federal election and 2014 Victorian state election several candidates were elected to both the Australian Senate and Victorian Legislative Council respectively with very small percentages of the primary vote – former Senator Ricky Muir received just 0.5 percent of the first preference vote in Victoria. However, through preference deals, the party was elected to the final seat with a final transfer of 143,118 votes from the Australian Sex Party, “whose transferred votes themselves had been transferred from over twenty other parties, arguably

\(^{12}\) Alternatively, several scholars have theorised a broader, all-encompassing definition of why electoral systems matter, based on the electoral system’s interaction with social and institutional factors. Menocal (2011, p.4) argued “electoral systems matter because – in interaction with other structural and institutional factors – they influence incentives regarding government effectiveness, violence and conflict, accountability, public policy, and electoral malpractice. There are trade-offs involved in all electoral systems. For example, proportional representation systems may be more likely than majority systems to produce desirable public goods – but they also foster greater corruption”.

\(^{13}\) There is also the question of whether politicians truly care about electoral formulas; the Parliament of Victoria recently asked the members of both Houses of Parliament to respond to survey about the effectiveness of Victoria’s electoral administration. Just 11 percent of 128 Members responded (Parliament of Victoria 2015).
coming from voters that had no idea that their vote would elect a candidate from such an unrelated party with such low electoral support” (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.61). Widespread public and parliamentary debate as to whether a candidate should be elected with 0.0034 of a quota continued until the announcement of the July 2016 federal election.14

Finally, electoral systems have important, symbolic qualities. An electoral system should, as effectively as possible, convert the will of the majority of the electorate into elected representatives15. Ideally, this collective decision should happen in roughly the same way, at roughly the same time. Thompson (2004; 2008, p.487) called this organising principle “electoral simultaneity”; the idea that voting together contemporaneously confers added legitimacy on the outcome, and that this legitimacy, the act of voting together, reinforces the civic bonds which we know, thanks to the work of Putnam (2000) and others, have fragmented in many Western democracies. The growth of early voting represents a fundamental challenge to Thompson’s normative position (Orr 2014). More people voting before Election Day than on it also represents one of the most significant “revolutions” (Gronke and Miller 2008) in contemporary electoral practice. Colin Barry, the former NSW Electoral Commissioner, once remarked that early voting was the most significant challenge for Australia’s electoral administration since the implementation of compulsory voting (NSW iVote presentation 2016, p.14).

Definitions of electoral reform – ‘major’ and ‘minor’ reform

As seen earlier, electoral system reform, often called electoral reform, is usually thought to involve changes in these rules and procedures governing the allocation of seats (Lijphart 1994). Although no clear agreement exists on how much change is required in order to qualify as electoral system reform, the term is understood to mean more than incremental changes in specific features of an electoral system. Thus, electoral system reform typically means a shift in the main principle by which allocation of seats takes place, such as a move from majority allocation to proportional representation or from candidate-based to party-list allocation (or vice versa).

Based on this definition major electoral system reform was thought to be a relatively rare event until the end of the 20th century, particularly in established democracies (see Katz 1980, 14 The 2000 US presidential election sparked similar concerns about the quality of US electoral administration. See Alvarez, Atkeson and Hall (2012, p.5).
15 This has not always happened in Australia; the example of South Australia’s “fairness clause” and Australia’s redistribution model is examined by Newton-Farrelly (2015).
p.123; Norris 1995; Cox 1997; Renwick 2010, p.252). Others go further: Benoit (2004, p.365) argued that the norm “in post war Europe was for electoral systems not to change”. Similarly, Katz (2005) argued that since 1950, amongst the established democracies, there were at best 12 cases of major, systemic electoral reform at the national level. However, this is only one view in the literature. What happens if we consider attempted reform? Katz (2005, p.59) noted that “if one takes a slightly more expansive view of electoral reform”, a potential list of electoral reforms grows considerably. In his seminal volume *The Politics of Electoral Reform*, Renwick (2010, p.5) suggested 60 incidences of major attempted electoral reforms in the 1990s. In addition, Qvortrup (2011) “identified sixty-nine cases of changes…in national and state (sub-national) electoral formulas from 1980 to 2010 (Bowler and Donovan 2013, p.8). If we calculate that there were approximately 190 nations in the world during this period, nearly a quarter of all countries attempted some form of electoral reform during the period of Qvortrup’s typology (Bower and Donovan 2013, p.8). Considered this way, electoral reform is a frequent, evolving institutional event.

While traditional conceptions of electoral reform focus on major systemic change (Lijphart 1994) there is no agreed definition of electoral reform. Perhaps the systemic literature has a limited view of institutional change? As noted by Bowler and Donovan (2011, p.7), the losers in electoral reform processes might “be on the lookout” for other opportunities to pursue their agenda. Or it could be that other actors in the electoral process are advocating for change, or many voices in general (Bowler and Donovan 2011, p.7) Either way, this has influenced the study of administrative reform, and the comparative lack of interest in ‘minor’ and ‘technical’ electoral reforms (Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011, p.478).

Further, not all electoral change should be seen as reform. As discussed in the Introduction, this study takes the view that electoral reform improves electoral processes, “through fostering enhanced impartiality, inclusiveness, transparency, integrity or accuracy” (ACE 2016, p.10). Yet these principles are not always clear in practice, especially with regards to early voting. Looking to US scholarship, Berinsky (2005, p.2) argued that reforms meant to stimulate turnout, such as increased access to absentee voting and no-excuse early voting in person, have had a ‘perverse’ effect, stimulating turnout amongst those already most likely to vote. As noted in the Introduction, this thesis’ second research question asks a conceptually similar thing. Others have found the opposite. In contrast to Berinsky, Miller and Powell (2015) demonstrated that convenience voting assists electors with disabilities to vote; Gronke and Stewart (2013, p.p.2-5) found that African Americans utilised – and were mobilised by –
early voting at the 2008 US presidential election. Further, reforms are also easily politicised; Twenty two US states have attempted to limit access to early voting, with subsequent litigation to challenge these laws (NCSL 2016).

Accordingly, developing a definition of what constitutes major reform as a process to understand minor reform is one element of the qualitative component of this thesis’ research design. Conceptually, the literature is split into two fields; the literature focusing on major reforms, and a newer literature focusing on minor and technical (administrative) electoral reform.

**Major reforms**

The most common definitions of major reform belong to the cross-national, comparative literature on electoral reform (Colomer 2004; Norris 1995). One major limitation of these studies is they treat the electoral system as a dichotomous variable; either a proportional representation system or a non-proportional representation system (Andrews and Jackman 2005; Blais et al. 2005). The result is that these studies do not often capture the diversity and complexity of electoral systems, or adequately define what a major, systemic reform is.

Of this group, the ‘classic’ typology is Lijphart’s *Electoral Systems and Party Systems* (Lijphart 1994). According to Lijphart (1994, p.13), electoral systems are defined by four elements: the electoral formula, the district magnitude, the electoral threshold, and the assembly size. Broadly speaking, “if there is a significant change on one or more of the four dimensions, this means that a new electoral system must be distinguished” (Lijphart 1994, p.13). How did Lijphart address the issue of what is significant, and how to classify the ‘new’ electoral system? Lijphart ultimately (1994, p.13) proposed a 20 percent criterion. As expressed by Jacobs and Leyenaar (2011, p.480) the assembly size, the district magnitude or the electoral threshold have to change by at least 20 per cent in order to identify an actual episode of reform. Lijphart counts 30 major electoral reforms between 1945 and 1994.

Nevertheless, Lijphart’s 20 percent criterion is arbitrary. Golder (2005) employed Lijphart’s 20 percent criteria but modifies the framework to include several new features focusing on the presidential elections and presidential runoff elections. He expected a different electoral system to emerge “when there is an introduction or abolition of electoral tiers, or a change in the way they are connected” (Golder 2005, p.103). Finally, two electoral systems are classified different if they are separated by a period of dictatorial rule. Following these
criteria, he distinguishes 261 different democratic electoral systems between 1946 and 2000. In contrast to Lijphart and Golder, Colomer (2004) argued there are four different types of electoral systems based on legislative ‘styles’: “indirect, majority rule (including multi-member districts with bloc ballot, multi-member districts with limited or cumulative ballots, and single-member districts), mixed systems, and proportional representation. He reported 82 major electoral system changes for assemblies between the four basic categories, and 126 changes between the eight subcategories (Colomer 2004, p.p.3-5).

Relatively, do major electoral reforms happen at the sub-national level? As noted by Bowler and Donovan (2013, p.7), one of the reasons why electoral reform was thought to be so rare is because studies focus on the national level, examining episodes of reform involving “the choice of electoral systems at the setting up of new constitutions in Central and Eastern Europe…or dramatic changes in electoral institutions as in the case of New Zealand in 1995”. As demonstrated by Calvo and Micozzi (2005, p.1325) the importance of decentralised subnational electoral reforms has been critical for explaining the recent evolution of party competition in Argentina, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, and Russia. Some theorists have also argued that subnational electoral institutions are more likely to be partisan than national counterparts (Gibson 2004). It may also be the case that sub national electoral reforms influence national electoral reforms; as we shall soon see, the introduction of direct enrolment in 2009 in NSW and 2010 in Victoria led to the introduction of direct enrolment for federal elections.

Nonetheless, discussions of major reform are limited in scope. Katz argued that if we apply Lijphart’s systemic definition, an argument could be made that electoral reform has never happened in established democracies (Katz 2005, p.60). However, this thesis argues that electoral reform is more prevalent. An electoral system is more than the rules determining seat allocations. In the literature there is also an important distinction between electoral systems and laws. According to Farrell (2001, p.3), election laws can be divided into pre-and-post election phases. The first phase of “electoral laws are the family of rules governing the process of elections; from the calling of the election, through the stages of candidate nomination, party campaigning and voting, and right up to the stage of counting votes and determining the actual election result”. The second phase is more instrumental and “deals with the process of the election itself: how citizens vote, the style of the ballot paper, the method of counting and the final determination of who is elected (Farrell 2001, p.4). Farrell’s position is supported by other scholars, notably Massicotte et al (2004). Their volume is
almost entirely devoted to electoral rules, such as electoral administration, rules governing access to voting, electoral registration and analysis of instrumental procedures like vote counting (Massicotte et al 2004, p.11).

Minor reforms

There are several positions in the literature on minor reform. One accepts the idea of minor reform in principle but offers no definition. Renwick (2010; 2011) falls into this category. Writing about the history of European electoral reforms since 1945, he identified the *elite-imposition* model – which is discussed shortly in the literature review addressing explanations for electoral reform – to explain how politicians and elites act in relation to reform. Citing Leyenaar and Hazan (2011), Renwick argued that “electoral systems can change through a variety of processes, involving widely differing actors, motivations, and outcomes. If we are to understand why electoral systems change (or remain unchanged), who has power to influence them, and what patterns are likely in the systems chosen, we must engage with these multiple paths, seeking to understand what processes are possible and in what circumstances they are likely to occur” (Renwick 2011, p.456). Similarly, Gallagher and Mitchell (2005, p.21) argued that the choice of what is major and minor reform should be delegated by country-based experts after assessing jurisdiction-specific case studies. Local experts understand the local political context and are best placed to assess what is major. However, as with other comparative studies in electoral reform (Norris 1995; Renwick 2010), this approach is problematic because scholars use different time periods in their studies.

Other scholars have attempted to more precisely define minor reform. Writing in Gallagher and Mitchell’s *The Politics of Electoral Reform*, Katz (2005, p.70) found there was no clear “dividing line between major and minor reforms; even more, there is no clear dividing line between reforms that might be considered minor, and those that might be considered trivial, technical or no reform at all”. He also analysed (2005, p.71) why parties change the rules of game that they are winning; if the rules of the game can be changed so easily via minor and technical reform, “then why don’t parties do it more often?” Katz thus linked minor reforms to questions of democratic legitimacy. Noting the introduction of compulsory voting in the Netherlands in the 1970s, he reasoned that parties sometimes introduce electoral reforms which are not to their immediate advantage.16 Acknowledging that the temptation to adjust

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16 The example of former South Australian Premier Steele Hall is a good example in the Australian context of a political party introducing a system reform which virtually handed an election victory to an opposition party. Hall led the South Australian Liberal Country Party to victory at the 1968 South Australian state election; on winning office he moved quickly...
technical aspects of the system is quite great, Katz argued that parties do not take this approach precisely because it is easy; perhaps, the constant attempts to reshape an electoral system via the lower hurdles to approval for minor reform might delegitimise a party’s democratic ambitions (Katz 2005, p.p.72-74). This argument supports Shugart’s (2005) view that reform has contingent and non-contingent factors.

Of all the approaches in the literature, Jacobs and Leyenaar’s (2011) (and to a lesser extent, Jacobs 2011) have developed the most sophisticated typology of minor and technical electoral reforms. Using Lijphart’s 20 percent criterion as the basis for their analysis, they develop five categories or “dimensions” of reform: proportionality, election levels, inclusiveness, ballot structure and electoral procedures (Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011, p.497). Any movement in the three main sub-dimensions of electoral formulas is classified as a major electoral change. They also considered reforms to be major when the average district magnitude or the effective threshold changes by at least 20 percent. Their framework is also the most comprehensive in the definitional literature regarding minor and technical reform. In this way, their approach is consistent with Massicotte et al’s (2004) conception of electoral rules, and Bowler and Donovan’s (2013) view of technical electoral rules as redistributive tools.

However, while analytically persuasive, Jacobs and Leyenaar’s approach has limitations. Regarding the treatment of their fifth dimension, or electoral procedures, Jacobs and Leyenaar allocated “all legislation on how electoral procedures are organised” into this dimension, justifying this “as electoral procedures have no direct relation with the electoral system (Jacobs and Leyenaar, p.503). As the authors readily admit, this dimension is their most underdeveloped. It basically includes ‘everything else’ that is not systemic reform, including changes to voting access procedures, the electoral management authority, as well as other election administrative processes. This oversimplifies the variety of administrative reform.

To summarise, this chapter has thus far demonstrated that electoral reform system is, to paraphrase Katz, ‘overweight’ on the system-side. If using proportionality-based measures, electoral reform would be rare. But it is not. Electoral reform happens “under the surface”

to remove electoral malapportionment in South Australia. Known as the Playmander, after former South Australian Premier Thomas Playford, Hall introduced legislation to reform the House of Assembly to a more equitable system of representation; the internal repercussions of this self-sacrificing act to the LCL were severe, as it virtually guaranteed Hall’s defeat at the next elections (Parliament of South Australia 2015, p.1; Costar 2011).
(Pilet 2007) and involves more than just the allocation of seats. As argued by Farrell (2001, p.1) and Massicotte et al (2004, p.10) electoral systems are made up of rules governing seat allocations and administrative electoral processes. Change to the latter category is just as important as the first; quoting Massicotte et al (2004, p.10) “if changes to electoral machinery [administration] did not matter, there would be no need to send electoral observers into development democracies”.

This amounts to two limitations in the existing scholarship. First, there is no agreement in the definitional literature about what constitutes a minor and technical reform. Scholars have attempted to theorise frameworks but, with the exception of Jacobs and Leyenaar’s (2011) study, there are few instances where a systemic, heuristic approach has been used. Second, if we accept that Jacobs and Leyenaar’s (2011) typology of electoral procedures as best practice, how might we recalibrate this framework to assess access to ballot initiatives like early voting? To assess this question, the chapter now evaluates prevailing explanations for electoral reform.

**What explains reform?**

Rahat (2011, p.538) noted that major electoral reform is “not part of everyday politics”. The Australian electoral system is an institution and while change occurs regularly, it is not always driven by political actors, and can involve “change around the edges” (Katz 2005) or administrative reform. Australia’s electoral commissions have authority to introduce technical and administrative amendments to electoral practices, particularly relating to early voting procedures. External forces (Renwick 2010) thus play a role in electoral reform. What approaches does the extant literature offer to explain electoral reform? Drawing on Strom’s (1990) conceptualisation or new institutionalism and Rahat’s (2011) and Norris’s (2009) classifications, this section examines two broad approaches – rational choice explanations, and historical comparative explanations including when politicians lose control, institutionalism, path dependency and the relationship between elite statecraft and electoral administration reform.

**Rational choice**

The central premise of rational choice explanations of electoral reform is that political parties are motivated primarily by their desire to win seats in a legislature. Benoit (2004, p.363) neatly summarised the rational choice theorem when he noted that “electoral laws will
change when a coalition of parties exists such that each party in the coalition expects to gain more seats under an alternative electoral institution, and that also has sufficient power to effect this alternative through fiat given the rules for changing electoral laws”. As noted by Rahat (2011, p.532), Benoit’s theory is one of several analytically parsimonious attempts to employ the rational choice theorem. Benoit also theorised when electoral systems would not change. According to Benoit (2004, p.373), “electoral systems will not change when no party or coalition of parties with the power to adopt an alternative electoral system can gain more seats by doing so”. Associatively, Renwick (2010) argued that this is the central reason for stability in electoral systems: “those who benefit most from the status quo and those who have the power to determine whether there will be a change or not are typically the same people”.

Expressed another way, electoral reform is one result of power-seeking individuals. Goodin (1996, p.24) formulated an approach based on the role of “purposive, goal-seeking agents”. In the case of electoral policy, in democratic societies control over the process is generally exerted by democratically-elected political actors, and the extra-parliamentary political institutions – generally parties – that they represent. Renwick (2010; 2011) terms this process ‘elite majority imposition’, explaining it as one of competition among elites for control over the reform process. The contest for control over “electoral policy is one waged by a small group of elected representatives, on behalf of their electors and extra-parliamentary networks of support”.

Drilling down further, why might parties and politicians seek to change electoral systems? Referring to new institutionalism, Strom identified three potential behaviours: vote seeking, office seeking and policy seeking (Strom 1990, p.566). The vote seeking approach stems from Downs’ (1957) seminal work on electoral competition, “in which parties are “teams of men” seeking to maximise their electoral support for the purpose of controlling government. Thus Downsian parties are not only vote seekers but vote maximisers” (Strom 1990, p.566). In contrast, taking Riker’s definition of ‘office’ as cabinet portfolios, office seeking parties attempt to maximise not their votes but their control over political office. As noted by Strom (1990, p.567), “office benefits refer to private goods bestowed on recipients of politically discretionary governmental and sub governmental appointments”. Further, policy seeking parties seek to maximise their effect on public policy. Policy-based coalition theory assumes that coalitions will be formed by parties that are ‘connected’ (Axelrod 1970) or at least close to each other in a three-dimensional policy space setting. Drawing on coalition studies, Strom
(1990, p.568) argued that this theory was developed “in response to the ‘policy-blind’ axioms of the first generation of game theoretic studies of government formations”, or specifically, the idea that all political coalitions are inherently feasible. In the first formulations of policy seeking conceptualisations, policy seeking was typically understood to occur alongside office motivation, not as an alternative.

Nevertheless, Strom’s constructs are widely critiqued. Regarding the vote seeking model, there are many incidences in established democracies where political parties do not actively seek votes. In Australia, a good example is the recent proliferation of minor parties seeking election to Senate. Glenn Drurey, the so-called ‘Preference Whisperer’, told the Commonwealth JSCEM in 2014 that minor parties are often established to direct small numbers of votes to dummy candidates (JSCEM 2014, p.32). We might apply a similar logic to the office seeking model given that many parties do not actively seek office. Drurey also told the JSCEM that many minor parties are not actually interested – or formed for that matter – to achieve office: “if you have 40 parties in the room, only two might genuinely be interested in sitting in Parliament” (JSCEM 2014, p.33). Further, Strom (1990, p.568) argued that the incidence of minority government in parliamentary democracies disproves the office seeking theorem; he coined the term “office shyness”. Conceptually similar comments can be made about the policy seeking model. While we would expect smaller parties to join a coalition and receive benefits from doing so, in Australia there have been cases where a coalition party has received a raw bargain; Costar has discussed the Nationals Victoria (Hughes and Costar 2006) vis-a-vis the Victorian Liberals.

In addition, Strom also criticised the models on the basis of their static and non-institutional nature. That is, the models do not account for the fact that parties operate in an institutional context. Accordingly, like Benoit, he proposed a unified model of party behaviour that “focused on the trade-offs between the three party goals” (Pennings 2006, p.257). Strom argued that pure vote seekers / office seekers / policy seekers exist in a three-dimensional space where “each party goal is represented by one dimension” (Pennings et al 2006, p.259), Strom developed a formula to describe party behaviour: \[ B = w_1V + w_2O + w_3P. \] \( B \) is a position in space, \( V \) is vote-seeking behaviour, \( O \) is office-seeking behaviour, \( P \) is policy-seeking behaviour and \( w_1, w_2 \) and \( w_3 \) are coefficients representing the effect of the behaviour. In practice, a party that pursues all three forms of behaviour falls somewhere in the middle of a triangle. A party that emphasises votes and policy over office will be somewhere to the right of the triangle.
**Limitations of rational choice**

Rational choice approaches to electoral reform have attracted some criticism. Referring to Strom’s model, one common critique is the distinct lack of prescription in rational choice explanations of systemic electoral reform. Rahat (2010, p.532) noted that rational choice is sensitive to procedures of reform; in other words, elegant, catch-all theories might not work for non-systemic reform. Benoit (2004, p.366) also found that his theorem, like Strom’s, should be checked “by a relatively rich level of contextual detail”. Rational choice theory is thus a starting point for electoral reform, not a deductive explanation (Rahat 2010, p.532).

Empirical, survey-based research has also pointed to the limitations of rational choice. Studying New Zealand’s adoption of mixed-member proportional representation (MMP) in the 1990s, Banducci and Karp (1999, p.218) found that partisan self-interest and historical factors influenced the adoption of MMP. Lamare and Vowles (1996) found something similar. As noted by Rahat (2010, p.533), these studies, and certainly others, demonstrated that “a major factor in the politics of electoral reform is indeed self-interest”, but that self-interest by itself does not sufficiently account for the occurrence of reform. To this end, Rahat (2004), Sakamoto (1999) and Renwick (2010) have proposed ‘wholesale’ critiques or rational choice theory on the grounds that no single theorem can explain the major electoral reforms of the 1990s in Italy, France and New Zealand, due to the complex melange of factors influencing reform.

Moreover, the general thrust of the rational choice approach in the electoral reform literature is one of muted acceptance. Many scholars (Blau 2008; Pilet 2007; Pilet and Boll 2011) have attempted to apply modern iterations of rational choice models, with some success, whilst others, such as Rahat (2006; 2010) have examined whether the theory works in certain conditions. To paraphrase Rahat, rational choice is something scholars of electoral reform may not be able to live with, but cannot live without. It provides convincing “explanations for regular patterns of preservation than in explaining cases of electoral reform (Rahat 2010, p.534).

**Historical comparative**

While explanatorily elegant, the rational choice approach thus provides few insights into the underlying, contextual processes which “constrain or facilitate” elite actions (Norris 2009, p.6). As an alternative, Rahat (2010, p.536) proposes the “historical comparative” approach.
These studies are not just descriptive, historical analyses of episodes of electoral reform. They combine elements of rational choice models – such as the role of partisan actors in the reform process – and available “behaviourist evidence concerning stands and behaviours” (Rahat 2010, p.534). In these approaches, the politics of electoral reform develops its own logic as a result of human decisions, interactions between political and non-political actors which is also bound “by procedural and administrative requirements (Rahat 2010, p.535).

*Why* electoral reform happens is conceptualised as a complex matter, influenced by short-term and long-term catalysts, including leaders and events surrounding reform, “the policies of party factions and their legislative behaviour in government coalitions, and the extra-parliamentary role of the reform movement, pressure groups and the media” (Norris 1995, p.3).

Renwick’s (2010) *The Politics of Electoral Reform* is arguably the most sophisticated attempt to develop a protocol for the historical-comparative study of electoral reform, comparing two approaches to reform; elite-driven and elite-mass interaction (Renwick 2010, p.p-11-22). He studied six cases of electoral system change, three of which he categorised as cases of ‘elite majority imposition”, as theorised above. These cases are the repeated changes of the parliamentary system in France, notably under Mitterrand; the 2005 change of the electoral system in Italy by Berlusconi, to a kind of majoritarian top-up for a PR election (along with much tweaking of the post-war PR system from the 1940s to the 1980s); and in Japan the maintenance and modification of the single, non-transferable vote system that helped sustain the dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) (that system is known as the ‘single non-transferable vote’). For elite-mass imposition, Renwick analysed the 1991 and 1993 referendums introducing mixed member systems in Italy following widespread corruption scandals, the adoption of a mixed member system in Japan in 1994 and the adoption of mixed-member proportional representation in New Zealand in 1993 (Renwick 2010).

While noting that the nature of the reform process was multifaceted in all six case studies, Renwick found elite-imposition has become a less convincing explanation for electoral reform in mature liberal democracies. He reported that the ability of the public to pressure for change has increased, as has the public’s knowledge of reform processes and capacity to pressure for reform through referenda. In this sense Renwick’s findings accord with Norris (2009, p.6), who also developed a historical comparative approach for assessing reform, what she called a ‘policy cycle’ model. Norris argued that the interaction between rationality and historicism should be seen as a cyclical process, with “public disaffection and lack of
political legitimacy could plausibly service as long-term context generating pressures for change, getting the issue of reform onto the policy agenda” (Norris 2009, p.7). In addition, elite-level bargaining “could determine the formulation of policy proposals and the negotiated outcome of the decision making process”. All interactions occur in four stages: an agenda setting stage, a policy making stage, an implementation stage, and a feedback stage (Norris 2009, p.7).

Reinforcing these points, Rahat (2008) conducted a systemic analysis of several failures to promote reform in Israel. He reasoned that what stops reform, a la Renwick (2010), may also explain what promotes it. Building on this, with Hazan (2010) they later developed an historical-comparative framework for assessing electoral system reform called the ‘barriers to reform’ (Rahat and Hazan 2011, p.479). Noting that no single approach adequately explains electoral reform (Katz 2007; Blais et al 2004), Rahat and Hazan’s framework, like Norris’s, synthesised rational choice and historical comparative approaches by focusing on the “menu of barriers that those that wish to promote reform might need to overcome” (Rahat and Hazan 2011, p.478). The barriers approach involves seven possible barriers to reform, drawing on the historical / comparative / institutional factors which Norris (1995; 2009), Blais and Massicotte (1996) and other early adopters of multi-method approaches to assessing electoral reform. The barriers are: procedural superiority of the status quo; political tradition; social structure; system-level rationale; vested interests; coalition politics and disagreement over content.

When politicians lose control (Renwick 2010, p.13)

A further branch of the historical comparative approach is when non-political actors lose control of the reform process. Renwick (2010, p.p.14-17) also demonstrated that several external actors – external in the sense that they are not part of the electoral institutional apparatus – influence electoral reform, albeit to different degrees. One actor is the legal system, specifically courts that oversee electoral disputes. While courts have played a relatively limited role in electoral system reform in few established democracies, with the US being a notable exception following the 2000 US presidential election and the Bush vs Gore case (Alvarez, Atkeson and Hall 2012, p.146) there is evidence that courts are playing an increasing role in minor electoral reform processes. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter Nine, the Victorian Supreme Court, sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns, was asked to determine whether the VEC’s interpretation of reforms expanding access to early voting was
consistent with legislation. In addition, politicians in an established democracy might lose control of electoral reform to individual experts. As explored by Hoffman (2015), Farrell and McAllister (2006, p.25) and Sawer (2001, p.p.8: 21-22), experts, like Catherine Spence, were intrinsically involved in promulgating the case for the alternative vote in Australia in the early 1900s. At the state level, Hirst (2006, p.17) examined how Henry Chapman advocated for the secret ballot in colonial Victoria in 1857. Nationally, a good example of expert influence is Antony Green; Green has been the ABC’s Election Analyst since the early 1990s and participated in many parliamentary inquiries into electoral matters. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, he provided the intellectual idea for reforming early voting practices in NSW.

Renwick also explored the role of citizens and external actors. Regarding citizens, Norris (2009, p.8) and Renwick (2010) argued that there are examples where citizens in emerging democracies have influenced electoral system reform, such as Hungary. However, in established democracies, it is unlikely that citizen-driven referendum will lead to systemic electoral reform. In Westminster democracies, citizen-led electoral reform initiatives are even rarer. Similar comments also apply to external actors; as demonstrated by Renwick (2010, p.15), Dawisha and Diamond (2006), episodes of pure external imposition of system reform are rare in established democracies, and still rare even if counting countries under foreign occupation such as Japan in the 1940s and Afghanistan in the mid-2000s. A more plausible approach is when actors in an established democracy, such as electoral commission, assist an emerging country to develop its electoral systems. The AEC has provided this type of electoral assistance since the mid-1970s in Pacific nations, South-East Asia and Africa.

Including these groups in an assessment framework focused on Australia is thus a necessary, and important, step in measuring electoral reforms, especially given the barriers to administrative reform may be lower.

Limitations of the historical comparative approach

Despite its adaptability, the historical comparative has some limitations. For instance, what weight do we associate to each barrier, and does the content of the reform relate to the strength of the barrier? Does history or a political culture trump coalition politics or the role of partisan self-interest in promoting reform? Further, as Rahat and Hazan (2011, p.493) acknowledged, “are specific barriers more important at certain stages of the reform process – as in Norris’ policy cycle model?” (Norris 2009; 2011). Similarly, Renwick (2011) questioned whether an electoral system might be crafted to overcome barriers to reform.
There is also the issue of parsimony. As noted by Rahat (2010, p.535), political scientists are always shopping for a single, more simple approach to analysing complex phenomenon. Due to this there are few studies criticising the historical comparative approach on the basis that an historical comparative study, in an attempt to build theory, ‘cherry-picks’ from a suite of factors to develop a model of electoral reform. Such customisation makes replication difficult.

A further critique relates to minor and technical reform, this thesis’ major concern. Notwithstanding Jacob and Leyneear (2011), few studies analyse if a hybridised approach explains minor and technical reform. This raises two related questions; does the extent of change “influence the menu of barriers” (Rahat 2010, p.535)? If so, is minor electoral reform more likely because the hurdles involved are administrative and procedural, compared to major systemic reform which usually involves substantial legislative and political reform?

Institutionalism

One of the central features of the historical comparative approach is institutionalism. Institutionalists expect electoral reform when the institutional context of the electoral system produces perverse outcomes. Lijphart (1994) famously argued that electoral institutions will closely mirror the structure of the society they belong to. Following Lijphart, Jackson and McRobie (1998) claimed that New Zealand’s adoption of MMP coincided with the social and cultural changes in New Zealand, and the spread of multiculturalism. Similarly, Rahat (2008) demonstrated the influence of social pressures on electoral reform in Israel in the 1990s. In the Anglosphere, Farrell (2011) and Dunleavy and Margetts (1995) demonstrated that electoral reform in the United Kingdom became a more pressing issue when the Liberal Party began to gain roughly 20 percent of the vote. The impact of ‘extreme’ electoral institutions on electoral reform has also been theorised by Shugart (2001, p.25), who argued that “electoral systems where representation is allocated in an extreme matter on either the inter-party or intra-party dimension are inherently prone to reformist pressures”. Shugart and Wattenburg (2001) extended Shugart’s work; they argued pressures created a more balanced system.

As discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Three, in the US concerns about declining voter turnout (Pew Centre 2016, p.1) led policymakers and reformists to explore a range of electoral reforms designed to promote access to the ballot, including absentee balloting and early voting in person. In this context, change was not necessarily driven by perceptions that the electoral system, predicated on non-compulsory turnout, was producing perverse or
‘extreme’ electoral outcomes, but that the turnout profile in a non-mandatory voting environment was benefiting only those who were already likely to vote (Berinsky 2005, p.472). In Australia, similar concerns about Australia’s electoral enrolment system led to a vibrant debate from 2008 to 2012 about the veracity of Australia’s electoral rolls and whether people were being actively excluded because of the traditional enumeration techniques used by electoral commissions (Hoffman and Brent 2011, p.22; Brent and Jackman 2007, p.4). At one stage, it was estimated that nearly 1.5 million eligible electors were not included on the electoral roll and therefore not voting. This stimulated debate about direct enrolment and adoption of the practice federally (in 2013), in NSW (in 2009) and Victoria (in 2010). Here, the ‘extreme’ product of Australia’s compulsory enrolment system was the exclusion of electors. As we shall see in later chapters, concerns regarding relaxed requirements for access to early voting in person have sparked debates federally, in NSW and Victoria about the growth of early voting.17

Path dependency

The interaction between politicians and other actors can also be interpreted as a form of path dependency. According to Norris (2009; 2011), who accounts for the implications of path dependency in her policy cycle model of electoral reform, electoral reform is understood to occur “in a broader environment in each country, including the role of path dependent historical traditions, the social structure and culture, and the economic structure” (Norris 2009, p.7). Change thus based on evolution “is closely related to path dependency. In an electoral sense the design of the institution reflects its origins, and institutions can become locked in due to social factors and what has come before” (Norris 2009, p.7).

Path dependency can take a number of forms but has generally been theorised in relation to electoral reform in three ways: by accident, evolution and intention (Goodin 1996, p.24). More recently, Renwick (2010, p.81) presented variants of Goodin’s ideas as “three forms of path dependence relevant to the field of electoral reform – power-based, normative and utilitarian”. Power-based path dependence refers to the capacity for those holding power to maintain the status quo and thereby derive benefit from an unequal system, while normative path dependence refers to problems of legitimacy created by extreme system operations. In

17 Another take on the ‘extreme’ outcomes thesis is the conception of diffusion or contagion. This is when other electoral systems are cited by elites or reformers to justify a reform process (Leyenaar and Hazan 2011).
contrast, utilitarian path dependency is related to original ideas of path dependency related to management theory. The classic, oft-cited example in the political science literature is the development of the QWERTY keyboard layout. The layout has outlasted and beaten several other more efficient keyboard layouts for nearly 50 years (Brent 2008, p.31).

Another central concept in path dependency is accident. While not entirely connected to the assessment framework outlined in Chapter Four, the concept is sufficiently similar to Berisnky’s (2005) idea that electoral reforms can sometimes have unintended consequences, particularly in relation to expanding access to the ballot. Accident is the idea that institutions can develop in unintended ways, responding to cultural, historical or social developments. Occasionally, institutions can also evolve organically; Goodin (1996, p.28) reported that “sometimes institutions just emerge accidentally, in unintended ways, in response to some historical accident or another, sometimes they just evolve naturally, in unintended ways, according to some deeper logic of their own”. Several scholars have explored the idea that Australia’s electoral institutions developed accidentally. Australia is often heralded as an electoral laboratory and for being one of the few jurisdictions to experiment and institutionalise compulsory voting and later, preferential voting. Farrell and McAllister (2006, p.25) found that the development of both was largely accidental, experimental and related to a unique confluence of factors immediately following Federation. Brent (2008) examined the history of Australia’s independent electoral administration. He “demonstrated that the inability of colonial institutions to address the challenges of electoral administration according to established British practice – namely through local government and the police forces – necessitated the development of entirely new methods by independent, non-partisan innovators, and through a ‘happy accident’ of circumstance the then-unique and world-leading bureaucratic model of Australian electoral administration was born” (Hoffman 2015, p.42). In Victoria, Hirst (2006, p.44) explained the contradictory logic underpinning the adoption of the secret ballot in Victoria in 1856 – while designed to empower the general public compulsory voting was also supported by conservatives because they could see some advantage in it. Path dependent and accidental innovation, therefore, must form part of any consideration of electoral reform.

*Elite statecraft and manipulation of the rules of electoral administration*

Of the rational choice and historical comparative explanations for electoral reform, the later best accounts for the influence of non-political and external actors. However, in the
Australian context, historical institutionalism requires further refinement. Accordingly, the section explores a new contribution to the electoral reform literature; analysis of elite manipulation of the rules of electoral administration (James 2013).

As explored earlier, electoral rules are different to electoral laws (Farrell 2001, p.3). There is growing academic interest in electoral administration, although it is certainly true that the electoral rules and procedures are less common than electoral systems scholarship. But there are exceptions: Massicotte et al (2004), Blais et al (2007) focus on electoral rules, as does Kelly (2008) in Australia. According to Johnston (2013, p.1), many of these studies are “hyper descriptive”, focusing on incredibly detailed, “anorak” accounts of elite manipulation of electoral administration to further a political agenda. This effect is called elite statecraft, or the idea that election administration is “not a neutral part of the state machinery, but often a site of political struggle” (James 2013, p.224). Bulpitt (1986) laid the theoretical framework for this position. He argued “that an elite cadre of politicians (the Court) will seek to follow their own interests and maintain power through winning elections. To do this, they seek to change and manipulate administrative rules around elections, as opposed to system-level interventions” (James 2013, p.224).

Due to the controversies arising from the 2000 US presidential election, there is an expansive literature examining US electoral administration reforms, particularly voting technology and voter registration, and how they have been manipulated for partisan advantage. Voter registration is a hotly contested issue in the US, especially in Florida and Virginia (James 2013, p.229). In a recent volume, Wang analysed how state legislatures – admittedly Republican-dominated state legislatures – have attempted to suppress voters using restrictive voter registration practices. Reflecting this, Johnston found that “the history of political conflict over election procedures can be framed as a proxy for deeper divisions on civil rights and access to the franchise” (Johnston 2013, p.2). Elsewhere, Herron and Smith (2013, p.279) discussed the introduction of the Florida state legislature passed House Bill 1355. While the Bill was “enjoined by the Supreme Court in 2013, it was in force for a year and the 2012 US presidential election” (2013, p.280). Among the legal changes promulgated by this bill were new regulations on community groups who traditionally assist with voter registration, such as the League of Women, “warning of prison time and fines, that voter registration agents were required to sign” (Herron and Smith 2013, p.280). They found that HB 1355 depressed registrations throughout Florida in the second half of 2011 when compared with registrations
in the second half of 2007. The pattern was evident among all registrants but particularly among registrants aged 20 and younger, and among individuals who registered as Democrats.

Early voting laws have also been a partisan battleground in the US. According to Gronke and Stewart (2013, p.7), recent state-level initiatives have “slowed and even reversed what seemed to be an irreversible trend toward more liberal early voting laws” (Gronke and Stewart 2013, p.7). As documented by Gronke and Stewart (2013), and the Brennan Centre for Justice (2016), at least 22 states have passed restrictive voting practices which have either limited the franchise, introduced voter ID requirements or restricted voter registration drives. Of these states, six have specifically curtailed early voting (Indiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin and Florida (Gronke and Stewart 2013, p.p.1-7).

While not specifically focused on early voting, James (2013) remoulded Bulpitt’s elite statecraft theory by recasting Bulpitt’s theories around “support mechanisms”. He theorised “bending the rules of the game” and “site for elite strategy” (James 2013, p.84), arguing that the partisans will seek to “make changes to the institutional architecture in which they operate” (2013, p.82) in order to win elections and maintain power. In this way, James argued “elites seek to manipulate election administration or maintain particular practices in order to maximize their chances of winning elections” (James 2013, p.202). However, James’ model is limited in several ways, as the author himself admits. In seeking to reshape theory about electoral rules James neglects discussion of other administrative reforms, focusing almost solely on voter registration in his study. This limits the explanatory power of his model. James admitted as much: “this knowledge is therefore not definitive, but it does advance our understanding by providing new insights which other approaches may not have” (2013, p.229). By focusing on the US and West European examples, James also neglects Australia, which is surprising given that Australia has, according to some commentators (Kelly 2008 and Farrell and McAllister 2006) done more than any other established democracy to institutionalise a mechanism for potential partisan manipulation of electoral rules – this occurs, said Kelly (2008), through Australia’s three dedicated parliamentary electoral matters committees.

Australia’s three dedicated parliamentary electoral matters committees are an internationally unique feature of Australia’s electoral administration system. As of 2016 there are, technically speaking, four of these committees – one in each of the jurisdictions in this thesis (the Commonwealth JSCEM; the NSW JSCEM and the Parliament of Victoria’s Electoral
Matters Committee) and the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in South Australia. Despite being one of the few conduits between the public and the parliament in electoral matters – and despite the regulation of Australia’s electoral laws being tightly controlled by the parliamentary sphere (Farrell and McAllister 2006, p.11) – there is little, direct scholarship addressing their work (Brent 2016, is a regular commentator) and even less examining how they contribute to electoral reform (Reader 2014a, p.497). Of the extant literature, Kelly (2008) argued that Australia’s two major political parties have influenced the Commonwealth JSCEM heavily, and that the committee has become “extremely partisan and primarily a means for furthering party interests” (Kelly 2008, p.73). Similarly, Brent (2016) found that the JSCEM had “run its course” and was merely a political forum with little teeth; Sawer (2004) and Hoffman (2015) offered comparable observations. Nevertheless, in a 2014 study of the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee, Reader (2014a) argued that the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee performed an important policy function, assisting the VEC to promulgate and advocate a public agenda for the introduction of Victoria’s direct electoral enrolment laws in 2010. This is analysed further below. Despite these studies, there is no literature showing how these committees have contributed to administrative electoral reforms expanding ballot access.

**Boundaries of research problem – early voting, and approaches to Australian electoral reform**

**Early voting**

As discussed in Chapter Three, the extant literature is heavily focused on how early voting affects turnout. There is little scholarship examining the drivers of early voting reforms in Australia and the United Kingdom, although there are some studies looking at comparable countries: Garnett (2014) examined the rise of advance voting in Canada, and Elections New Zealand (2015), in New Zealand. In Australia, Sawyer (2001, p.p-16-21) documented the development of postal voting via historical analysis of women’s suffrage; Qvortrup (2005) and Kersting and Baldersheim (2004) also examined the drivers of postal voting but not early voting.

Somewhat surprisingly, the US convenience voting literature also offers few, direct insights. While there is an emerging scholarship addressing the partisan effects of administrative

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18 For most of 2014-2016 the Parliament of South Australia has intermittently debated a Bill to introduce a joint standing committee on electoral matters.
electoral reform (Krompf and Kimball 2013), there is less literature focusing on the
development of absentee and early voting, or why Republican legislatures have actively
sought to reduce access to convenience voting. Fullmer (2013) examined the development of
early voting across the US-states. Based on interviews with state electoral officials and other
sources, he documented the history of early voting in the US, beginning in Texas and how,
while it was “once supported on a bipartisan basis, has become more divisive in recent years”
(Fullmer 2013, p.61). He also found that the partisan perspective had shifted: Republicans
were once in favour of early voting for budgetary reasons, but have changed views in recent
years according with Barack Obama’s successful mobilisation of early voters in 2008.
Fullmer’s account is buttressed by Fortier’s (2006, p.4), with Fortier offering slightly less
historical detail.

Empirical studies have suggested a more nuanced role for partisanship in relation to early
voting reforms. The ‘stand out’ study in the US context concerning the assessment of the
drivers of the early voting in the US belongs to Biggers and Hanmer (2015, p.204). Using a
unique dataset identifying the adoption date in each state of no-excuse absentee and in-person
early voting, they demonstrated that political factors played a modest role in the enactment of
these policies, with “partisan state legislative strength exerting little influence and control of
the governorship playing a role only in enacting early voting provisions” (Biggers and
Hanmer 2015, p.203). Successful adoption also “derived from the utility of the voting
method, with larger populations of those that would benefit from convenience voting (such as
the elderly and rural residents) and increased geographic size leading to its implementation”
(Biggers and Hanmer 2015, p.203). Moreover, they reported that partisan concerns played a
role in the enactment of early voting reforms, but so did electoral officials, “who saw early
voting as a tool to facilitate participation (but only when there [were] few risks involved”
(2015, p.203)). This finding is supported by Burden et al (2012), who assessed the attitudes
of local election officials to early voting. Fullmer (2013) offered a similar analysis regarding
early voting sites.

These studies are as close as we come to assessing the drivers of early voting reforms, in
either the US or Australian context. This is a notable gap in Australian electoral studies,
convenience voting and electoral reform – this gap in knowledge is directly addressed by this
thesis.
There is a rich literature examining Australian electoral system reform and its consequences: federally (Farrell and McAllister 2006; McAllister 2011; Hughes and Costar 2006; Tham, Costar and Orr 2011; Sawer 2001), and at the state level (Costar and Economou 1992, 1999; Economou 2006; Costar 2014). The triumvirate of ‘hot’ topics is compulsory voting (Hill 2004; DeBats 2013; John 2015; Orr 2016), preferential voting (Farrell 2001; Farrell and McAllister 2006; McAllister 2011; Colomer 2004) and Upper House voting reform (McAllister and Mackerras 1996; Economou 2006; Costar 2014). Following the 2013 federal election there was a vigorous debate about the first changes to the system of voting for the Australian Senate since the introduction of proportional representation in 1983 (Economou 2016), introducing a further modification to the above-the-line voting mechanism decried by purists (Proportional Representation Society of Victoria and Tasmania 2015, p.p.1-5) and psephologists (Mackerras 2015). There was some consensus around the partisan nature of reforms; in summary, with a record number of minor parties elected to the Senate in 2013, the major parties ultimately colluded to pass changes which would make it harder for crossbenchers to control the Senate from 2016. An alternative view (Green 2016a) was that the changes would benefit Australia’s democratic system, and increase the transparency of Senate elections and ensure that only candidates who achieved a ‘reasonable’ percentage of the first preference vote were elected. All these studies can be delineated by Lijphart’s 20 percent criterion as major, electoral system reforms.

In 2016 the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee also examined Upper House reform to curb the capacity for minor parties to be elected (Parliament of Victoria 2016). In March 2016 the Queensland Parliament fast-tracked changes repealing optional preferential voting for Legislative Assembly elections in under 17 minutes (Green 2016). Although parliamentary reports, these documents provide insights into the parameters of the partisanship debate.

In the theoretical literature addressing Australia’s electoral systems, there is a latent debate about the relationship between electoral reform and Australia’s two major parties, as conceptualised by the party cartelisation thesis. The party cartelisation thesis supports Colomer’s (2004) argument that political parties collude to ensure electoral survival (Katz and Mair 1995, p.5). Marsh (2006) argued there is extensive evidence of party cartelisation in Australian politics, namely, that the major parties have used their resources and control of
public finance for elections to limit participation and competitive entry by minor parties. For Marsh, the Hawke Labor government facilitated a process whereby the major parties came to converge on major economic policies, marking a new phase of cartelisation (2006, p.7). Ward and Young (2006, p.90) support the cartelisation argument; they found that Labor and the Coalition have colluded to provide campaigning and administrative support of their party organisations.

In contrast, others scholars have argued that the evidence for party cartelisation in Australia is weak. Smith and O’Mahoney (2006, p.110) reported that the rise of the Greens and other minor parties suggested weak evidence of cartelisation. Similarly, Economou (2006) analysed the 2002-2003 constitutional and legislative changes – these are addressed in Chapter Nine – to the Victorian Parliament’s Legislative Council introducing proportional representation and fixed, four-year parliamentary terms. While written just after the first election conducted with the new system, Economou (2006) demonstrated that the changes, introduced by the then Bracks Labor government, resulted in the first minor party representation in Victoria’s traditionally conservative Upper House. That the constitutional amendments were introduced by an incumbent, successful government cuts against the rational choice view of electoral reform Further, Economou’s work contributes to Goot’s (2006, p.189) scholarship which suggested that there is no strong party cartelisation system in Australia. Citing debates around repealing compulsory voting in the mid-1990s, Goot (2006, p.190) argued that the Coalition’s reluctance to ultimately support the measure, which was widely believed to favour it electorally, in Parliament revealed a complex interplay between the Labor Party’s views on the matter and potential public backlash.

Despite these systemic-level analyses, in the Australian electoral literature there are few analyses of administrative electoral change, or the role of political parties shaping electoral rules. As discussed in the Introduction, Farrell and McAllister (2006, p.169) suggested this was an area where the Australian literature could improve. One exception is commentary around direct enrolment laws. As noted earlier, Hoffman and Brent (2011, p.22), Brent and Jackman (2007) and the AEC (2014) demonstrated that Australia has an electoral enrolment problem. Hoffman and Brent (2011, p.25) found strong evidence based on analysis of the Commonwealth JSCEM’s inquiries that the Liberal Party views direct enrolment as a potential Labor strategy to artificially ‘enlarge’ the roll, given evidence in the turnout literature that larger turnout tends to favour leftist parties (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Similar themes were picked up by Douglas (2015) in his examination of the ‘lost votes’ at the
2013 Senate election – he found that the Liberal chair of the Commonwealth JSCEM saw partisan advantage in making an example of the AEC’s administrative malpractice. In both these examples, while it is clear that the Liberal Party favoured a particular outcome, it is an open question as to whether these actions were evidence of cartelisation, deliberate strategy or accident / misunderstanding.

These administrative reforms are the only examples of analysis of minor reform in the Australian literature. Early voting does not feature. As proximal as we get to discussion of the drivers of early voting reform in the Australian context is discussion about electronic voting. Since 2011 the NSW Electoral Commission has administered iVote, now the world’s largest electronic voting system. While there is a strong, technical literature (NSW Electoral Commission 2014; Teague et al 2014), Smith (2016, p.68) recently found that Australian electors have a favourable view of electronic voting, using this platform for discussion about why some countries have abandoned electronic voting experiments (Denmark) for partisan reasons, yet others, like Australia (NSW), have achieved strong support from electoral authorities and politicians.

**Parts of the research discussed in other areas**

**Role of parliamentary committees in electoral policymaking**

Despite little critical interest in Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committee, there is a diverse scholarship assessing the role of legislative committees in Westminster parliaments, including how they influence policy. Committees can influence the policy process in a number of ways. In the Australian literature Halligan et al (2007) argued that “committees can affect each stage of the policy cycle, including agenda setting, developing policy, decision making (indirectly), the implementation of decisions and evaluation and consultation” (Reader 2014a, p.496). In addition, Monk (2010) and Aldons (2000) have proposed frameworks for assessing the work of parliamentary committees on the basis that they have an impact on government policy agendas.

Committee impacts are not always indirect or focused on governments. Hawes (1993) described the process of “bureaucratic anticipation”, whereby a government sometimes may respond to an issue addressed by a committee before the committee has released a final report. A more nuanced treatment of the non-quantifiable approach to assessing Westminster parliamentary committees is Russell and Benton’s (2011, p.80) concept of “contributing to a
wider debate”. In one of the largest ever studies of committee impact based on the British House of Commons committee system, studying thousands of recommendations, they theorised, on the basis of hundreds of elite interviews with committee members, that the capacity of committees to air issues as part of a wider policy debate was a key influence. They noted: “[committees] bring issues to attention, and provide arguments to fuel continued debate….many interviewees emphasised the potential for a committee to ‘crystallise a body of opinion’ and sometimes ‘provide the tipping point’ in a debate” (Russell and Benton 2011, p.80).

Based on Russell and Benton’s findings, Reader (2014, p.508) found that the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee played an important role in the passage of direct enrolment laws in Victoria in 2010. He documented how the committee provided an opportunity for the VEC’s former commissioner, Steve Tully, to advocate for direct enrolment but not breach the VEC’s strict emphasis on impartiality. He argued, in turn, for Australia’s electoral commissions and parliamentary electoral matters committees to play a greater, collaborative role in electoral policy development (Reader 2014a, 510), consistent with the international literature on the capacity of electoral institutions (AEC 2014). In contrast, Kelly (2012), and Brent (2009), have argued that Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees are too compromised by partisanship to play a useful role in promoting administrative and other minor electoral reforms.

Role of electoral commissions in democratic election processes

The final issue addressed in this chapter is the role of another non-political actor in Australia’s electoral institution architecture, the electoral commission. Australia’s nine electoral commissions, including the AEC, the NSW Electoral Commission and the VEC, are legislatively responsible for conducting elections in their respective jurisdictions. This is their primary responsibility under legislation, along with several other functions, including determining who is eligible to vote, managing the nominations of parties and/or candidates, administering public funding, conducting polling, counting the votes and tabulating the results (Wall et al 2006, p.5; Massicotte et al 2004). They also foster democratic deliberation of electoral rules (Tham 2013, p.11). This is an important function for an independent electoral management body. The Commonwealth Secretariat noted that the “status, powers and independence of the electoral administration and administrators, and the impartiality with
which they act and are seen to be allowed to act, are fundamental to the integrity of democracy” (Tham 2013, p.7).

As independent specialists, Australia’s electoral commissions play a unique role in electoral policymaking by advising executive government on electoral matters. They also enforce and sometimes make electoral rules (Tham 2013, p.5), in an impartial and independent manner. However, there is some debate about the extent of their role in this respect. On the one hand, one position argues they should remain impartial so as to ensure complete impartiality in their role as election ‘umpires’, and not veer into the realms of policy advice. This separation confers substantial democratic legitimacy on Australia’s election results, and Australia’s electoral practices, which are regarded by many as international ‘best practice’ (ACE Project 2016, p.2). The strongest advocates for impartiality are Australia’s electoral commissions. Tom Rogers, the Australian Electoral Commissioner, argued that commissions must be “beyond reproach”, and any crisis of legitimacy can result in substantial damage to a country’s democracy (Rogers ERRN 2015, p.2). These comments relate to the AEC’s response to the loss of 1370 ballot papers at the 2013 Senate election, which triggered a new Senate election for Western Australia in 2014.19 In addition, the VEC is a strong advocate for commission impartiality. During the interview process Liz Williams, Deputy Victorian Electoral Commission, said that the perception of impartiality “was the key plank of the VEC’s work” (Williams 2014, p.2). These comments reinforce similar comments by the past two Victorian Electoral Commissioners: appearing before the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee in 2008, Tully said that the VEC’s role was to “run elections, not intervene in policy debates” (Parliament of Victoria 2007, p.4).

In contrast, another position suggests Australia’s electoral commissions are not just administrators narrowly defined. Colin Barry, the former NSW Electoral Commissioner, once said that “electoral commissions are in the political game:

I mean it’s a little bit like the test cricket umpire saying that we are above the game of cricket. Well you are actually in the game of cricket… the important thing is that your integrity is preserved because you are not favouring one side or another (Kelly 2008, p.82).

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Ed Killesteyn, former Australian Electoral Commissioner, has also said that the functions of an Australian electoral commission, and electoral system design, are interrelated (Killesteyn 2014, p.2).

There is thus evidence, particularly at the parliamentary committee level, that Australia’s electoral commissions could play an enhanced role in the democratic deliberation of electoral rules. In the institutional context, Reader (2014a) called for the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee to establish an oversight arrangement with the VEC, akin to the relationship between the Victorian Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and the Auditor-General. This relationship would satisfy the paradox, noted by Tham (2013, p.10), that greater institutional independence creates an increased obligation (on the part of the commission) to be publicly accountable for its work. These issues were also debated in 2014 by the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee, which ultimately recommended a “more formal relationship” between it and the VEC (Parliament of Victoria, p.65).

Following the AEC’s administrative mishaps at the 2013 federal election, an emerging literature has examined whether Australian electoral commissions have, through lax administrative rules, accidentally breached the strict impartiality underpinning their operation. Douglas (2015) evaluated the legal and administrative context of the ‘lost votes’ incident, including the Keelty (AEC 2013) report, which found that there were cultural issues – amounting to complacency – within the AEC which contributed to the misplaced ballot papers. As a result of the Keelty report the AEC implemented a new training regime for the 2016 federal election, emphasising the sanctity of the ballot paper as a “blank cheque” for democracy (AEC 2016). Chapter Nine also examines a challenge to the 2014 Victorian state election on the basis that the VEC failed to properly implement s98 of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic). This finding effectively legitimised early suspicions, expressed by the Commonwealth JSCEM (2011; 2014) and the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee (Parliament of Victoria 2012, p.84), that electoral commissions had stimulated demand for early voting by loosely enforcing access to it.

These questions lead to another: how have Australia’s electoral commissions contributed to electoral reform? Tham (2013) argued that when electoral commissions make electoral rules, they should be subject to the rules of deliberative democracy outlined by Thompson (2004). He argued that commissions “can perform a valuable public role by fostering democratic deliberation of electoral rules by enhancing the deliberation occurring in other institutional
contexts” (Tham 2013, p.15) – a similar position to Reader (2014a) relative to parliamentary committees. Two questions emerge. If Australia’s electoral commissions are classified as experts, can they participate in policy debates without compromising their independence (Hughes 2000)? Is this consistent with Renwick’s (2010) view about experts in electoral reform?

Conclusions and unanswered research questions

This chapter evaluated two prevailing theoretical debates in the electoral reform literature about definitions of electoral reform and methods to explain electoral system reform in established democracies. Citing Katz (2007), Rahat and Hazan (2011, p.478) summarised that there is consensus in the literature that no one approach succeeds in explaining electoral system reform. Rational choice theories are elegant but lack detailed insight into historical, cultural and social dynamics which contribute to reform. Historical comparative and institutional approaches offer this contextual information but accordingly lack specificity; they can be tailored to suit any context, making portability difficult. A multi-paradigmatic approach grounded in the historical comparative model appears best, as it combines the strength of both approaches alongside additional assessment principles, such as the influence of path dependence. While studies of electoral reform are systems focused, scholarship about minor and technical electoral reforms, reforms that happen “under the surface” (Rahat 2010) and electoral rules (Farrell 2011; Massicotte et al 2004) is underrepresented. Two key sub questions of the thesis’ first research question are: how can we adapt systemic-focused theories of electoral reform to assess and explain Australia’s minor and technical reforms to early voting in person? Are existing frameworks suitable for this task?

While there is considerable interest in the impact of the general shift towards early voting at US elections on voter turnout, much less is known about the drivers of early voting reforms in the US context. We know even less about why there have been regular legislative and technical reforms to early voting for federal, NSW and Victorian elections in the past 15 years. This gap is directly related to the ‘major’ versus ‘minor’ reform discussion in the international electoral reform literature; while a rich scholarship has examined Australia’s electoral exceptionalism – compulsory voting and preferential voting – these studies are, again, focused on electoral system reform. By assessing amendments to electoral rules governing early voting in the three selected jurisdictions, this thesis makes a unique contribution to the emerging literature on Australian administrative reforms, which includes
the recent adoption of direct enrolment and electronic voting. Given the thesis’ conceptualisation of Australia’s tripartite electoral participation problem (AEC 2014), this analysis is timely. More Australians are voting early with each electoral cycle; in the absence of individual survey data, understanding the drivers of early voting may also aid studies of electoral participation.

This chapter also suggested potential Australian-based modifications to the historical comparative approach to electoral reform. To properly assess Australia’s early voting reforms, we must also consider the role of Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees, and Australia’s electoral commissions. Doing so touches on research in other fields, including committee studies and deliberative democracy. Drawing on theories of elite statecraft, this thesis examines how Australia’s early voting reforms have been influenced by political actors – or partisan interests – and non-partisan actors as conceptualised by Renwick (2010). Accordingly this thesis contributes to the emerging scholarship on parliamentary committees and electoral policymaking. By looking at Australia’s electoral commissions and minor electoral reform, the thesis contributes to the international literature on electoral management bodies.

Accordingly, Chapter Four proposes a framework to assess and explain Australia’s early voting reforms. The framework is an historical comparative approach adapting Rahat and Hazan’s (2011) ‘barriers to reform’ model and Norris’ (2009) policy cycle model. The chief modification is including measures for Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees and electoral commissions.

The next chapter, Chapter Three, situates the thesis’ second research question in voter turnout and early voting literatures.
Chapter Three: Voter turnout and early voting

This chapter assesses the literature on voter turnout and early voting. It begins by discussing the problem of electoral participation, explaining why participation is important and exploring why turnout has declined in established democracies like Australia. The chapter then contextualises the current state of Australian electoral participation, exploring Australia’s tripartite electoral participation problem and the impact of compulsory voting on electoral behaviour at federal elections. The chapter then theorises early voting as a reform designed to promote turnout in both compulsory and non-compulsory voting systems. Following this, the chapter outlines four models explaining voter turnout – the Resources model, the Social-Cultural model, the Political model and Electoral / Institutional model, which form the theoretical basis of the multivariate models in Chapters Six, Eight and Ten. The chapter concludes by discussing evidence about the compositional effects of early voting in the US literature, and the lack of research into the turnout effects of early voting at Australian elections.

Why is electoral participation important?

Voting is the central act of the democratic process. While some argue that voting is but one of many forms of political participation (Marsh and Kaase 1979, p.p.86-89), voting is the most direct contact citizens have with how they are governed. Dalton (2004, p.4) called voting the “defining feature of the democratic process. [Elections] are the critical juncture where individuals take stock of their various political attitudes and transfer them into a single vote choice”. Voting also ensures that citizens can hold democratically elected representatives to account. In this way, voting is a type of interview process. In their citizenship education module Passport to Democracy the VEC (2016, p.1) likened voting to the process of “hiring and firing” members of Parliament.

Not everyone agrees that voting is important though, or that high turnout is desirable. There is an older argument in the comparative democracy and electoral systems literature that high levels of voter turnout can lead to negative electoral outcomes such as societal disruption, institutional instability and in extreme cases, conflict. Toft (1995) argued that voter mobilisation can be linked to authoritarianism, such as the rise of Nazism; Lijphart (1994; 1997, p.10) associated increased voting activity in Germany during the final years of the Weimar Republic with the rise of Nazism (Martin 2010, p.5). In the US, high turnout is
associated with classism. Summarising his book on the 2014 mid-term elections for *The Atlantic*, McElwee (2015, p.12) argued that high turnout “may lead to policies that somewhat better reflect the views of poor and middle-class Americans, but other factors will continue to favour the affluent”. In other words, not voting is a libertarian position – if more people vote, the system is so designed (at least in the US) so that more rich people benefit, not ‘you’. Notions that the game is rigged in favour of big America formed a significant component of the 2016 Democratic presidential primary process (McElwee 2015, p.10).

Of course, the counter-argument to this is that the only way to reduce the influence of elected representatives is to vote, and that registration is the single most effective barrier to reducing turnout (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978, p.22; Highton 2000, p.109). In this way, voting has been conceptualised as important because it leads to more stable institutional outcomes. As documented in Chapter Two, the electoral systems literature associates certain types of political systems with electoral stability. Lijphart (1997, p.11) noted that the data “favours the theorist who believes that the citizen involvement enhances legitimacy instead of producing democratic breakdown”. In other words, promoting voting promotes stability. In their official enrolment literature the AEC links stability with voting, and the AEC’s (and Australia’s) work assisting developing countries to develop robust electoral institutions and voting practices, on its website:

> Being active in the electoral process enables you to have your say in who runs your country, paying the ultimate respect to those people who worked to secure these rights on your behalf. It is not only your right and privilege to vote, but your responsibility to do so (AEC 2017, p.1).

Voting also matters because it has policy outcomes. Philosophically Mill argued that public participation in elections is a central component of democracy – indeed, the most important element of democracy – because turnout guarantees that you are participating in the electoral process and making your voice heard. Mill thus believed that participation was the only way electors can get politicians to listen to and implement favourable policies. Recent US-based scholarship supports this idea. Studying eighteen capitalist democracies Hicks and Swank (1992, p.659) linked electoral participation to higher levels of welfare spending. Hill and Leighly (1992, p.351) also found a similar relationship “between class bias in participation and the generosity or otherwise of social welfare policies” (Hoffman 2015, p.14). These findings reinforce Lijphart’s argument about “unequal participation” (Lijphart 1997), or the
notion that participation has an agenda setting capacity; if you vote, you have a role (however small) in public discourse and where the money is spent.

Vote early, vote often

As documented in the Introduction, early voting has increased dramatically at all Australian elections since 2002, particularly at federal, NSW and Victorian elections. While postal voting has increased somewhat, as shown in the Introduction, early voting has been the standout voting trend – nearly 30 percent of Victorians voted early in person at the 2014 Victorian state election. At the 2015 South-West Coast by-election to replace retiring former Premier Dennis Napthine, 51 percent (or 20,152 of 41,294 electors) voted before Election Day. Similar increases have also occurred in other established democracies. Fullmer (2013) documented how the US pioneered the concept of early voting, beginning in Texas in the 1980s and spreading to western states in the 1990s (Fullmer 2013, p.61). As of 2016 37 US states allowed no-excuse absentee and early voting (Fullmer 2013; Fortier 2006; NCSL 2016). Democracies comparable with Australia have also embraced early voting – advance voting has increased substantially in New Zealand (Elections NZ 2015, p.2), and Canada (Garnett 2014). Flexible, in person voting is thus a multi-national trend which some have called the greatest shift in electoral practice “since the abolition of poll taxes” (Issenberg 2016). It has major implications for many aspects of electoral administration and electoral studies.

However, some scholars see early voting as a challenge to the basic premises of democratic practice. Thompson (2004; 2008) established that elections have important physical and situational properties, based on the principle of “electoral simultaneity” (Thompson 2008, p.488). Thompson argued the idea of voting together, and roughly at the same time, has important democratic qualities: “citizens should vote as far as possible at the same time”. It infers equality on the contest – in the sense that votes have access to the same information to inform the casting of their vote if they vote together, on a single day. In Just Elections, Thompson also argued that simultaneity ensures that no citizen’s vote is more valuable than another; by “publicly participating in a common experience of civic engagement, they demonstrate their willingness to contribute to the democratic process on equal terms (Thompson 2004, p.487). Thompson urged caution regarding the widespread roll out of early voting services in the US. Nodding to Putnam (2000), he found that “voting alone may be worth less than bowling alone” (Thompson 2004, p.488).
Others view early voting as an opportunity to replicate Election Day on a larger scale over a longer period. Thompson’s argument assumed that people vote ‘alone’ when they vote early, and they do not. This probably refers to the adoption of postal voting, not early voting in person. However, even postal voting is ritualistic; writing about Australia and the UK, Orr noted:

Completing a ballot, perhaps over a cup of tea in the familiarity of one’s kitchen, is a ritual of sorts. It may, for some, feel like a moment where two worlds intersect: the domestic and the affairs of state. For others though, the postal ballot might be an afterthought, another piece of paperwork, along with a pile of bills, to be dispatched in front of the television (Orr 2014, p.154).

How do these observations apply to early voting in person? Reformers and supporters of early voting in the US have reported that the temporal shift to voting before Election Day has come to approximate the Election Day voting experience, except with more people (Gronke, Evas-Rosenbaum, Miller 2008). A similar situated has occurred in Australia where early voting centres are increasingly beginning to look and feel like Election Day voting centres (Reader 2014b, p.2; Orr 2015, p.158; Chen 2015). As the numbers of early voters has increased over the past decade, political parties strategically commit volunteers to work at early voting centres, as have minor parties (Carroll 2015; McIlroy 2016). Some centres even host a sausage sizzle.20 The social capital of voting, the civic activity of joining your peers in line to queue for the polling place, has been transmogrified to election offices and office buildings. These views are supported by a diverse literature suggesting that the face-to-face interactions that mark Election Day voting create social capital and draw electors to vote (Arceneaux, Kousser, and Mullin (2009); Fortier (2006); Kropf, Swindell and Wemlinger (2009).

Reformers in the US (Presidential Commission on Electoral Administration 2014, p.2) also argue that early voting alleviates traditional participation issues. Unlike in Australia, where voting occurs on a Saturday and is compulsory for federal elections for all citizens aged 18 years or over, in the US Election Day falls on a workday (Tuesday), not the weekend (Orr 2014; Fortier 2006, p.11). Many people work on weekdays and securing time off is difficult.

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20 For an international audience, the ‘sausage sizzle’ usually occurs at Australian Election Days because Election Day polling places are often situated within school grounds. Schools turn over the neutral space between the polling place, i.e., the school grounds, to community groups who often sell cakes or run a barbeque selling sausages for a fee. Media reports have suggested that increased early voting in person may detract from small charity’s fundraising activities, due to lack of attendance at Election Day polling places (Harrison 2016).
for many. Queues are also an issue; in his second inauguration speech President Obama famously said that “we need to fix [long queues]” (Presidential Commission of Electoral Administration 2014, p.2). Suffice to say, the extent of agreement ends here. As we shall see later in this chapter, there is a fierce debate about whether early voting stimulates, or suppresses, turnout, and whether it stimulates, or merely amplifies, existing biases in the electorate.

**Declining turnout**

Despite these arguments, there is a wealth of literature suggesting that electoral participation is declining. There is a vibrant debate in the deliberative democracy and turnout literature as to why. Some scholars (Putnam 2000; Wattenburg 1998) have argued that the reason why electoral participation is falling is declining civic engagement and general disinterest in formal electoral politics. Others have suggested that declining participation is due to a corresponding rise in alternative forms of political expression, particularly amongst social groups who are not traditionally predisposed to vote (Martin 2012, p.4). Attending a protest (Norris 2002; Dalton 2005), signing petitions (Inglehart 1997) and participation in online social media campaigns has replaced voting.

To the extent that voter turnout in established, Western democracies has declined over the past two decades, there is debate about how these falls are measured, and the degree of the decline. Comparative studies, which are similar in focus to the electoral systems studies evaluated in Chapter Two such as Gray and Caul (2000) and Wattenburg (2002), have suggested that the turnout decline has occurred in almost every established democracy. Wattenburg noted that “it is rare to find a trend” so widely generalisable in comparative politics (Wattenburg 2002, p.28). Gray and Caul found that turnout decline can best be explained in terms of changing patterns of group mobilisation and electorate demographics.

However, critics of the comparative, cross-sectional approach suggest that these studies share a similar shortfall, as noted in Chapter Two, with the comparative electoral studies literature; that the goalposts are easily changed under time series analysis. Focusing on the period 1945-2000, several scholars have argued that declines in turnout are not as pronounced. Norris (2002, p.p.42-45) found that only eight of 27 post industrial democracies experienced a turnout decline from 1945 and 2000 – in a further point, Norris argued that there is little evidence to support a protracted decline in voter turnout. Similarly, Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) found that 1945 and 1990 was a time of stability in electoral participation.
In contrast to the post-war and the post-communist periods, there is some consensus about contemporary turnout. In countries comparable with Australia, there is a downward, uniform trend; in Canada, Blais et al (2007) and Elections Canada have documented how turnout has fallen at each successive election since 1995. Similarly, Elections New Zealand (2017) has also documented a decline in voter turnout; Vowles (2012, p.2) discussed the 2011 New Zealand election and the “relative absence of voters in the polling booths as ‘the saddest day for democracy in New Zealand’” (TV3, 2011). He also (2012, p.4) noted that “to find a New Zealand election with lower official turnout than 2011 [74.2 percent], one must go back to 1887, well before when women attained voting rights…New Zealand turnout in 2011 was the lowest ever experienced in the country under conditions of full adult suffrage”. In addition, the United Kingdom has experienced similar concerns about declining turnout, with only 66.1 percent of electors voting at the 2015 UK general election (BBC 2015).

**Australian tripartite turnout problem**

Australia is also experiencing declining voter turnout at federal and state elections. As noted in the Introduction, Australia has a tripartite turnout problem: declining voter turnout, declining levels of electoral enrolment relative to population growth and increasing levels of informal voting. There is considerable evidence documenting this trend in the secondary literature and from Australia’s electoral commissions, despite some definitional disagreements.

**Voter turnout** has declined, or at least plateaued, at all federal and state parliamentary elections since the early 2000s.\(^\text{21}\) Beginning with federal elections, turnout has remained at 94 percent or above since the 1925 federal election, when it was 91 percent (AEC 2010). However, turnout at the last three federal elections has dipped under 94 percent; in comparison, for the three elections held in the 2000s (2001, 2004 and 2007) turnout was never lower than 94.3 percent. For the five elections in the 1990s (1990, ’93, ’96, ’98) turnout averaged 95.01 percent. These are official AEC data and are expressed as turnout as a percentage of the enrolled population. If we use the voting age population or VAP method (IDEA 2016), the picture is less rosy – VAP turnout at the 2013 federal election was 77 percent. Brent (2008, p.1) argued that the VAP method is a more accurate reflection of voter turnout for federal elections, commensurate with his research into the AEC’s electoral

\(^{21}\) In NSW and Victoria turnout has declined at a greater pace relative to parliamentary elections (VEC 2015).
enrolment initiatives. In contrast, Australia’s electoral commissions seem more comfortable with the enrolled population measure (AEC 2015; VEC 2015).

In the two states in this thesis, NSW and Victoria, parliamentary elections have experienced similar declines. Turnout has declined at a slower pace in NSW than federal elections and Victorian elections, down from a high of 93.5 percent at the 1995 NSW state election to 92.3 percent at the 2015 NSW state election. Victoria has seen similar declines although one could argue that the VEC has taken a greater interest in this trend than the NSW Electoral Commission; the VEC’s reports to Parliament on state elections since 2006 have systematically documented declining turnout at the Victorian state elections. State-level turnout thus is declining slowly, contiguous with other trends, such as declining electoral enrolment.

Declining electoral enrolment has attracted the most critical attention of the tripartite factors. While the introduction of direct electoral enrolment for federal elections (2013), in NSW (2009) and Victoria (2010) suggests the idea of boosting electoral enrolment is widely accepted in Australia, there are competing perspectives. The bulk of critical opinion (Hoffman and Brent 2011; Brent 2008; Brent and Jackman 2007) has argued that Australia has/had a structural enrolment problem due to the efficiency of the AEC’s traditional enumeration strategies – door-to-door canvassing and information sharing amongst government agencies resulted in more people being removed from the roll than being put on it. Direct enrolment was seen as a tool by the AEC and commentators (Brent 2008; 2016) to help address this. However, there remains a view in the Liberal Party that direct enrolment merely swells the roll in Labor’s favour, and that people should ultimately take the personal initiative to update their details (Commonwealth JSCEM 2014; Parliament of Victoria 2008; 2011; Brent 2016). This may explain why Australia’s electoral commissions have cautiously implemented direct enrolment since 2010; many initiated the process with a ‘trial’ of school students rather than a wholesale implementation (VEC 2011, p.iii). Moreover, the overall proportion of people unenrolled is falling but there are still problem groups, such as 18-24 and the Indigenous population (AEC 2014, p.3).

Informal voting is the final part of the tripartite ‘problem’. Informal voting has slowly increased at federal and Victorian elections – nearly six percent of votes in House of Representatives and the Victorian Legislative Assembly were informal at the 2013 federal election and 2014 Victorian state election respectively. Informal voting in NSW is less due to
its system of optional preferential voting, which Green (2015) and the NSW Electoral Commission (2014) have demonstrated reduces informal voting by allowing electors to vote ‘1’ only on a ballot paper. There is some debate as to why informal ballots are increasing at the federal level and in Victoria. Advocates for voting system reform (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.p.60-70) and the VEC (2014) have suggested that ballot paper sizes are increasing due to increased numbers of candidates (and dummy candidates)\(^{22}\) (Costar 2013, p.2), making it more difficult for electors to correctly complete the ballot paper. This argument has been explained fully by Green in relation to Senate voting practices and the infamous 1999 NSW Legislative Council ballot paper, the largest ever printed for an Australian election with 281 candidates (Green 2015, p.2; Farrell and McAllister 2006, p.218). Others argue that the increase is associated with changing demographics; the VEC (2015) established correlations between informal voting and Districts with high levels of non-English speakers, and lower levels of education. Accordingly, educating electors how to vote correctly is a potential solution to informal voting (Hill 2016).

There is also an argument that informal voting is a rational response to electoral disillusionment. The VEC has shown, using findings from informal ballot surveys, at Victorian state elections, that up to 30 percent of informal ballots for the Legislative Council at the 2014 Victorian state election were apparently deliberately informal (VEC 2015, p.67). This is explored further in Chapter Ten by including unique data in the Electoral / Institutional model from the VEC’s informal ballot paper surveys at the 2014 Victorian state election.

*Australian perspectives – compulsory voting and socio-economic characteristics of turnout*

A unique feature of Australia’s electoral system democracies is compulsory voting. About 30 per cent of the countries in the democratic world mandate participation on Election Day (Massicotte et al 2004, p.160)\(^ {23}\). This electoral innovation has arguably had the most pronounced influence of all of Australia’s electoral rules, including the introduction of the secret ballot in 1856. Compulsory voting for federal elections was introduced in 1924, for

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\(^{22}\) As discussed briefly in Chapter Two, dummy candidates are candidates who seek nomination not to win office but to direct preferences under Australia’s transferrable vote system to another candidate. Appearing before the Commonwealth JSCEM in 2014, Glenn Durery – a private individual who has assisted several minor parties to secure election to the Australian Senate – told the JSCEM that many parties often field candidates who do not want to be elected (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.61).

\(^{23}\) Enforcement regimes vary between countries. Australia has a relatively prescriptive enforcement regime for federal and state elections (the fine for not voting at a federal election is $20, $110 in NSW and $78 in Victoria) but prosecutions are rare given increasing costs associated with mounting a legal case against non-voters.
NSW state elections in 1928 and Victorian state elections in 1924 (AEC 2016). As noted by Farrell and McAllister (2006, p.4), in contrast to the US, compulsory voting has freed political parties from having to mobilise or ‘get out’ the vote. This has allowed political parties to focus on attracting electors without the cost and administration issues traditionally associated with encouraging electoral participation. Despite the recent declines in turnout documented in the Introduction and earlier in this chapter, Australia routinely has some of the highest turnout rates for general elections at the federal and state level in the world (Blais et al 2004).

Compulsory voting has had a very strong impact on the electoral behaviour of Australian electors. The first impact is stability in party identification. One of the key indicators of stability in modern democracies is “the tendency of voters to support one or other of the major political parties consistently over a long period of time, a phenomenon that has been particularly strong and persistent in Australia” (Farrell and McAllister 2006, p.4). Australia’s two major political parties, the Liberal / National Coalition and the Labor Party, benefit from compulsory voting (Farrell and McAllister 2006, p.p.4-5). While there have been recent declines in party identification in Australia, as documented by Bean and McAllister (2012, p.343), and a rise in support for minor parties like the Australian Greens (AES 2013; AES 2016), the 2013 AES nevertheless demonstrated that 73 percent of voters still identified with one of the two major political parties, with approximately 20 percent of respondents saying they support their party strongly. This measure has been relatively consistent in the AES in the 21st century (Bean and McAllister 2013).

Extrapolating, we also know that compulsory voting tends to advantage the Labor Party compared to the Coalition. This is because, via Birch (2009) and Blais et al (2004), turnout tends to increase participation because the penalty for not applying forces some electors to reassess the costs of non-participation. Further, we also know that younger, poorer and less educated electors are less likely to vote (Almond and Verba 1963; Blais et al 2004; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). In the Australian context, there is evidence that higher levels of turnout favour Labor, whereas under voluntary voting the Coalition would nominally benefit – hence, the Coalition’s concerted efforts during the 1990s, led by then Senator Nick Minchin, to abolish compulsory voting (JSCEM 2001; Fowler 2013). However, there is less clarity around the magnitude of the effect of compulsory voting in Australia (Mackerras and McAllister 1996). While Healy and Warden (1995) suggested that no one group might can be sure how introducing voluntary voting might affect electoral participation, Jackman (1997,
p.40) estimated that under a voluntary voting environment, the Liberals share of the vote could be as much as 7.4 percent higher than Labor’s. These findings bolster Mackerras and McAllister’s research (1996) about the “built-in bias” of compulsory voting against the Coalition in Australia, and Farrell and McAllister’s (2006, p.139) findings that the Coalition lost about half of one percent of the first preference vote at the 2001 and 2004 federal elections due to compulsory voting. Relatedly, these findings are supported by Fowler’s (2013) analysis of turnout around the time of the introduction of compulsory voting for federal elections in 1924, which broadly associates compulsory voting with an increase in electoral support for Labor.

In addition to this evidence about the left-wing bias of compulsory voting, the AES, over the years, has established several relatively consistent patterns in the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Australia electors. Referring to the 2013 AES, while “partisan attachment relating to socio-demographic groupings have changed and weakened over time in Australia” (McAllister 2011), there are some consistent trends of note. We know the Coalition tends to attract higher levels of support from older age cohorts compared to Labor and the Australian Greens. The 2013 AES found that 56 percent of respondents in the over 65 age cohort voted for the Coalition, compared to 29 percent for Labor (Bean and McAllister 2013). In the 45 to 64 age cohort, 45 percent of respondents said they voted for the Coalition compared to 35 percent for Labor and eight percent for the Australian Greens (Bean and McAllister 2013). Education also displays some consistent effects. Although class voting has declined over time at federal elections (McAllister 2011; Bean and McAllister 2013), Labor tends to attract support from electors with higher levels of education compared to the Coalition; those who say they voted for the Australian Greens are also much more likely to have a tertiary education (AES 2013). For instance, in 2013, 39 percent of those who said they voted for the Coalition held a tertiary qualification compared to 48 percent who held non-degree qualifications and 48 percent who held no post-school qualifications (AES 2013). In contrast, 35 percent of those who said they voted for Labor held a tertiary qualification, whereas 34 percent held no post-school qualification. Amongst those who said they voted or the Australian Greens, 16 percent held a tertiary qualification compared to six percent for both non-degree and no post-school qualifications (Bean and McAllister 2013). Data from the 2013 AES also demonstrate that “clear patterns of differential party support continue to be evident based on employment status or sector. According to Bean and McAllister (2013), the self-employed are much more likely to vote
Liberal–National, while those employed in the public sector are more likely to support Labor and the Australian Greens.

*Mechanisms to address falling turnout – early voting*

In established democracies, the three most common reforms thought to spark turnout have been electoral enrolment, electoral education and increasing access to the ballot, i.e., early voting, postal voting or absentee balloting in the US. As noted already, this thesis is concerned with early voting.

What does the literature say about the effect of early voting on voter turnout? Most of the empirical evidence comes from the US, where convenience voting has resulted in what Gronke (2008) called a “quiet” revolution in electoral practice thanks to state-level reform efforts and a significant, recent endorsement by the Presidential Commission on Electoral Reform (2014, p.iv); one of the commission’s key recommendations was “measures to improve access to the polls through multiple opportunities to vote before the traditional Election Day”. Nonetheless, to say there is a sharp divide in the literature about the impact of early voting reforms on turnout is an understatement. On the one hand, several scholars argue that early voting reforms have failed to stimulate turnout at either midterm or presidential elections. Most recently, Burden et al (2012, p.95) found that while Election Day registration (EDR) has had a consistently positive effect on turnout, early voting “is actually associated with lower turnout when it is implemented by itself”. They reported that early voting has “created negative unanticipated consequences by reducing the civic significance of elections for individuals and altering the incentives for political campaigns to invest in mobilisation”.

These finding support other empirical analyses in the literature which suggest that early voting does not necessarily stimulate aggregate turnout. Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, and Miller (2007), for example, concluded that early voting had no effect on turnout in national elections between 1980 and 2004. Apart from exclusive vote-by-mail, none of the early or absentee voting laws they studied boosted turnout in either presidential or midterm elections (Gronke et al (2008), Oliver (1996)). Wolfinger, Highton, and Mullin (2005) also report mixed results for turnout.

These studies contribute to a wider literature, as discussed in Chapter Two, about the unintended consequences of electoral reform. Referring to the widespread use of electoral reforms such as EDR and early voting, Bersinky (2005, p.480) famously argued that the drive
to reform had resulted in “unintended consequences”\textsuperscript{24} He argued that reforms can either stimulate new voters or retain existing voters, with stimulation thought to occur via the “strategic mobilisation efforts of campaigns that engage in a media blitz as Election Day approaches” (Burden et al 2012, p.98). But the theoretical view conceives of mobilisation as more than the efforts of campaign or party elites whose primary interest is in winning elections. To this end, Larocca and Klemanski (2011, p.76) found that early in-person voting had a negative and statistically significant correlation with turnout at the 2000, 2004 and 2008 US presidential elections, based on state-level analysis. In this strand of the literature, early voting provides convenience to regular voters, particularly those already registered, turning a once day-centric process into a weeks-long event “that diffuses public visibility” (Burden et al 2012, p.95).

In contrast, several scholars have reported that increased access to early voting can make it easier for under-represented groups to vote, thereby increasing turnout. Most of this literature is somewhat dated now but should be mentioned. In a US national study using Census and Population Data, Oliver (1996) found that early voting and liberalised absentee voting laws aided turnout in 1992 only when parties actively mobilised citizens to participate. Dubin and Kalsow (1996) also reported small gains from early voting in California in the early 1990s, while Lyons and Scheb (1999) found that programs helped retain infrequent voters in one Tennessee County in 1996. At the administrative level, several studies have found that there is a link between increased turnout and early voting sites; Neely and Richardson (1996, p.179) found “if increased participation is a goal, then the proximity and accessibility of voting sites in population centres is a must”. Stein and Garcia-Monet (1997) also found that counties offering more non-traditional early voting sites, like supermarkets and shopping centres, had higher levels of participation. More recently, Fullmer (2014, p.81) found that the density of early voting sites in an area has a significant and positive effect on voter turnout.

\textsuperscript{24} Bersinky’s (2005) findings are obviously important to this thesis. In a practical sense, as explored in the Introduction, electoral reforms should, by the nature of reform, improve electoral processes. Berinsky’s analysis was one of the first to signpost that reform, even if well-intentioned and theoretically sound and supported, can have unintended consequences. The unintended consequences of reform may be closely related to path dependency, or the idea that, perhaps, Australia’s early voting reforms have not had the effect they were intended for. Yet, we do not know what the intended effect was, hence this thesis’ first research question.
Models of voter turnout

Before considering what the literature says about the compositional effects of early voting reforms in the US, Australia and comparable countries, we must consider the major theories explaining why people vote. This theoretical discussion foregrounds Chapter Four, which explains and operationalises the voter turnout models used for the multivariate analyses in Chapters Six, Eight and Ten.

Basic voting model

Researchers have attempted to explain voting calculus since the 1950s. Downs (1957) developed the first model of voter turnout, situating the choice to vote within the realms of rationality. He argued that citizens will vote when the perceived benefits of participating exceed the cost of participation. Downs’ model was later altered by Riker and Ordeshook (1968), who argued that electoral participation provides citizens with an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the electoral system itself and to demonstrate their affiliation with a political party or coalition. More recently, Aldrich (1993) argued that voting is an inherently irrational activity, as the chances of casting a vote that influences the outcome of the election are small compared to the costs of participation. Nevertheless, according to Aldrich (1993) many people still vote because of a form of manipulation of political parties and campaigns, who expend significant funds on ensuring voter turnout. Parties foster an ‘irrational fear’ of not voting and how this impacts the elector’s everyday life.

Most studies of voter turnout follow what has become a consensus voting calculus equation: 

\[ R = pB - C + D, \]

where \( p \) represents the probability of an elector voting, \( B \) represents the benefits of decisively influencing the election result, and \( C \) and \( D \) the respective costs and benefits of participation, regardless of the election result. If \( R \) is positive, a rational actor is expected to participate.

Given that it is compulsory to vote at Australian parliamentary elections, this calculus must be refined. There are two notable contributions in this area: Panagopoulos (2008, p.455), who adapted the rational choice approach to participation for compulsory voting systems, and Singh (2011: 2015), who refined Panagopoulos’ ideas through analysis of compulsory voting in Switzerland. Panagopoulos’ basic modification to the calculus involves factoring in the costs of voting and the costs of abstention. He argued that in “compulsory voting systems that impose non-trivial formal penalties for non-voters, the costs of abstention will, for the most
part, outweigh the costs of voting ($C_{NV} > C_V$). Accordingly, he adapted the equation to $qC_{NV} > C_V$. Alternatively: $R = pB - qC_{NV} > C_V + D$, with $q$ representing that electors can expect to pay the cost of non-compliance with some probability.

**Modelling the equation – four models of voter turnout**

This section presents four different models of the voter turnout at Australian elections. Each model corresponds to one aspect of the compulsion equation. The four models are the Resources model, the Social-Cultural model, the Political model and the Electoral / Institutional model. These models house the independent variables in the regression models used to estimate Division and District-level early voting turnout effects in Chapters Six, Eight and Ten. The models correspond to established variable treatments in the aggregate voter turnout literature.

**Resources model – employment and tertiary education**

At the individual level the Resources model assumes that the greater a person’s socio-economic resources, the more likely they are to vote in elections. We can assume that this relationship holds at the aggregate level for this study. Resources naturally determine whether a person can, or cannot, vote, and does not just include physical resources, but also mental resources or knowledge. Verba and Nie (1972) first developed the Resources Model of Participation, linking age, income and education with lower barriers and costs to voting. In *Who Votes*, Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) also found that occupation, age and income were the most important factors explaining one’s propensity to vote. Age increases knowledge and political knowledge (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Growing older increases the amount of information available to an individual. Individuals that are more knowledgeable thus spend little effort compared to others, for instance younger electors, when formulating a vote decision, meaning they have a cognitive advantage (Singh 2014, p.65).

If resources are important, we would expect that people with greater socio-economic resources, including higher levels of education and income (combined with higher age, although age is not by itself a predictor of higher turnout (Ansolabhere et al 2012), will find it easier to participate than others. Education has been found to have the most significant resource-related impact on electoral participation. According to Nie, Junn and Steihlik Barry (1996), education attainment is perhaps the strongest predictor of participation in the
literature. The ‘raw’ logic is thus: the more education you have, the more you know and the more likely you are to make informed decisions about politics, the economy and to overcome the administrative challenges associated with voting (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). While the greater the educational attainment the higher the likelihood of electoral participation (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, p.5), higher or tertiary education is regarded as having the sharpest effect on the probability of voting. Blais (2004, p.230; 2006, p.116) found a 30 percent gap between secondary school leavers and those with a tertiary education in relation to voter turnout. While there are no definite explanations as to why there is such a robust relationship between higher education and turnout – Hillygus (2005, p.25) argued a humanities education might be linked to higher order skills such as verbal reasoning and political understanding – some scholars have reframed the effect as a dynamic process (Burden et al 2009) which commenced with expansions of access to higher education. Thus higher education is a turbo-charged explanation for turnout which applies to both compulsory and non-compulsory electoral systems (Panagopoulos 2008). The implication being that amongst those with higher education, the age-related effect of turnout flattens considerably.

Education is also closely related to other resources like income. It is helpful to place this in comparative international context. The OECD Better Life index measures OECD countries based on income levels, employment, voter turnout, civic duty and a subjective measure of overall ‘happiness’. The 2016 index established a clear link between income and employment; “while money cannot buy happiness it does lead to higher living standards…finding a job and good education and skills are important requisites for finding a job” (OECD 2016). This is an indirect way of saying that the likelihood of having a good job, and having income, is linked to education, and that the more steady and ‘better’ your job, the better off you are. The thesis’ argues that unemployment is another important resource measure of participation. Nevertheless, it is not widely theorised in the political science literature.

However, the relationship between turnout, employment and the economy is theorised in the econometric literature, with competing perspectives. On the one hand, we might expect, using the basic logic above, that employment increases an elector’s resources and therefore increases the likelihood of voting. This is the approach used in this thesis. US Census Bureau data from 2010 reveals that employed individuals are significantly more likely to vote than unemployed (66 percent versus 57 percent) (Census Bureau 11629, 2010). Similar research has found that wealthier individuals are more likely to vote (Milan 2005). Coupled alongside
research showing that home owners are more likely to vote, we can say that house ownership is strongly correlated with having a job, and thus employment is a measure of affluence.

Nevertheless, the econometric and game theory literature offers a counter argument. Charles and Stephens (2011, p.111) investigated the relationship between labour market activity and voter turnout. They found, although the relationship is weak, that employment reduces the available amount of leisure time and thus actually depresses turnout because it increases the cost to $C$ in our equation of becoming informed about electoral administration and the contest. Some survey research offers partial support for this finding: Statistics Canada (in conjunction with the Labor Force Survey of 2011) found a linear association between employment and voting – “in a model with work related variables only…individuals working 30 to 39 hours a week were more likely to vote than those working fewer hours…while those working longer hours were negatively correlated with voting” (Statistics Canada 2011, p.5).

Yet this thesis argues that the Charles and Stephens’ study underestimated how political knowledge is transferred. Under their model “the mechanisms by which voters are exposed to political information, such as discussions with friends and family, are complementary with leisure time” (Charles and Stephens 2013, p.115) and are reduced by employment hours. However, it is reasonable to expect that people gain political knowledge from many sources, including their workplace during tea break discussions with their colleagues and work friends. They also assumed that work hours reduce the time available to vote. In the US and United Kingdom, this has some validity given that voting occurs on a weekday, but in Australia’s compulsory system voting takes place on a Saturday (for at least 70 percent of the population still). The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cwth) also provides for employers to provide to time off in lieu of voting. Further, we also know that unemployment is a disincentive to political participation. The financial burden of unemployment will reduce one’s leisure time and capacity for participation.

Further, the thesis includes employment as a variable in the Resources model because the limited survey data we have in Australia about early voting suggested that the most popular reason for voting early in person is weekend work commitments. In a post-election survey of 100 early voters for the VEC Colmar Brunton (2007) found a combined total of 60 percent of respondents said they voted early because they were either working or travelling on Election Day.
Social-Cultural model – population stability, density and homogeneity

The Social-Cultural model is not a formal label in the aggregate turnout literature. However, the thesis organises the variables under this banner in order to separate them from the Resources model above. This model is about populations and is grounded in the Communitarian Model of Participation (Parry and Moyser 1984; Eagles and Erfles 1989). The basic thrust of the communitarian model is that participation is the result of tensions and relationships between community identification and community cohesion. Broadly, communitarianism is a philosophy that emphasises the connection between the individual and the community. It is usually conceptualised as a collection of interactions, among a community of people in a given place, or among a community who share an interest or a history.

Verba and Nie (1972), Schlozman (2002) and Thompson (2004) have demonstrated that group pressures arising with communities formulate pressure to vote as a type of civic duty. Correspondingly, via Geys (2005, p.639) we know that population stability can be expected to increase turnout rates. A stable population can lead to stronger feelings of group identification and therefore a similar ‘social pressure’ to vote (Hoffman-Martinot 1994; Ashworth et al 2002). Residing in an area for a long period of time also results in greater identification with the local area, its political and social issues; using survey data from the UK Dowding et al (2011) show that higher social capital, which can be linked to longer residency, increases the likelihood of voting. Inversely the negative effect of intending to move diminishes when people have more social investments in their community. Social capital is thus conceptualised as a form of trust between members of a community, and can be thought of as a form of ‘social capital’ which decreases the C of voting in our equation (Verba and Nie 1972). In addition, Geys (2005, p.644) argued that “outmigration may indicate higher non-voting as potential voters might live elsewhere in the near future and be unaffected by local policy”. In Geys’ meta-analysis, he found “a theoretically expected positive relation between stability and turnout” (Geys 2005, p.644).

The size of a community also influences voter turnout. In turnout studies, this variable is often used as a dummy variable explain differences between rural and urban electorates. As noted by Geys (2006, p.644), the basic sociological explanation behind a population size variable relates to the idea that social bonds are weaker within a peri-urban or urban structure (Hoffman-Martinot 1994, p.14), leading to a weaker consensus around core social norms. An
older version of this argument posited that cities are more “individualistic” (Riker and Ordeshook 1968), meaning there is less social pressure in built-up areas and less chance that a neighbour or a peer is going to think better of you for voting: voting is thus about prestige (Riker and Ordeshook 1968). Low density politics is also understood to be more personal (Blank 1974). In areas with small populations, such as rural areas and small towns, people are more likely to know candidates running for election and the people staffing campaigns. A good example in the Australian context is Northern Territory elections. With electorates of approximate 7,000 people the Northern Territory Electoral Commission has explained how Election Day in Darwin involves “running the gauntlet” (NTEC 2015, p.3). The ‘gauntlet’ is the entrance to polling places; in a relatively small city like Darwin (approximately 112,000 people) political party volunteers handing out how-to-vote cards may well be known to electors.

For the purposes of turnout community cohesion is also intrinsically related to population homogeneity. The thesis uses a variable for “born overseas”, which is not classified by a time period, i.e., recent immigrant. Evidence suggests that immigrants to established democracies tend to have lower levels of participation than naturalised counterparts (Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) (for evidence about Latinos in the US see Cassel (2002); de la Garza et al (1992). The rationale is related to the Resources model. New arrivals to places like Australia and the US tend to migrate for economic opportunities; when they arrive then have fewer resources such as income, property and therefore higher costs to voting. In addition, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) proposed a civic volunteerism model of political participation that stressed civic skills, engagement, and recruitment. Their study, which included a large subsample of Latinos, found that Latinos demonstrated a lower propensity for all three of these variables. Further, “when they separated native and foreign-born Latinos, they found a larger gap, with native born Latinos behaving more like Anglos and Blacks, and foreign-born Latinos to be the least engaged, least recruited, and has the lowest level of civic skills” (Barreto and Munoz 2005, p.55).

In this context we would expect people born overseas to participate less in elections, but perhaps be stimulated by additional opportunities to vote before Election Day, especially in a compulsory voting system which flattens the turnout profile. Nevertheless, in Victoria the VEC has demonstrated that newly arrived immigrants from African and some South East Asian communities tend to mobilise for voting around the traditional Election Day, due to the VEC’s efforts to work with multicultural community organisations representing migrants to
encourage awareness of voting and knowledge of Australia’s electoral system (VEC 2011; 2015).

**Political model – political competition variables**

Political variables can also explain voter turnout in some contexts. Put simply, the political context of an electoral contest can influence turnout. The most cited political factor is closeness or the perceived closeness of an electoral contest from the elector’s perspective. Reflecting this the thesis includes three different measures of closeness in the Political model: closeness at the two candidate preferred level (2CP), or the two candidates expected by the electoral commission in each jurisdiction to receive the majority of preferences; the 2CP count at the early voting centre level; and, the closeness measure between the candidate who received the most votes and the candidate who came third, thereby approximately 2CP-1.

The rationale as to why we would expect closeness to be important is related to our original equation. According to Matsusaka (1993, p.313), the existence of a relationship between closeness and turnout is important to “instrumental theories of voting, theories based on the idea that people vote in order to affect the election outcome” (Matsusaka 1993, p.313). As we know, the rational voter theory as developed by Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968) posits that a person's expected benefit from voting is “increasing in the probability his vote is decisive, that is, the probability it forces or breaks a tie” (Matsusaka 1993, p.314). Expressed as a probability, the hypothesis that a single elector will cast a deciding vote in an election is counterintuitive because the chances of this are essentially zero (Matsusaka 1993, p.314).

In view of this irrationality, some scholars have argued that elites are more likely to motivate electors to vote in close elections (Dubois and LePrince 2016). Increased elite political mobilisation efforts are designed to facilitate turnout amongst as many social groups as possible and lead to higher turnout (Geys 2006, p.647).25 Regardless of the measurement, closeness matters – Geys (2006, p.648) meta-analysis demonstrated that the estimated size of “the effect is such that an increase in one standard deviation with closeness increases turnout rates by 0.58 – 0.69 standard deviation units”.

25 An important clarification is required here. Geys (2005, p.647) pointed out turnout studies analysing the impact of closeness are split into ex post and ex ante studies. Ex post studies study turnout using the actual election result whereas ex ante studies attempt to estimate results using a combination of previous results, media coverage and opinion polls. The thesis uses the ex post method in the regression models.
Further, the number of parties or candidates contesting an election can affect turnout. There is little consensus around this effect. Intuitively, it might be expected that more candidates increases participation because electors have more choices available; \( X \) choices appeal to more people exponentially (Blais and Cartey 1990; Hansen 1994). We would also expect to see more parties in a healthy political system, creating additional confidence amongst the electorate about political competitiveness and the importance of voting; the AEC has suggested that Australia’s multiparty political system provides everyone with an opportunity, or avenue, to vote (AEC 2016). Nevertheless, a proliferation of candidates contesting an election can have the opposite effect, generating concerns about political fragmentation and the representativeness of a country’s electoral institutions (Jackman 1987). One example of this effect may be the proliferation of minor parties in the Australian Senate. While proportional representation has ensured minor party representation in the Senate, advocates for electoral system reform have observed that one effect of the rise of the minor parties might be a temporary fall in turnout resulting from the electoral system adjusting to a new, diversified party environment (Proportional Representation Society of Victoria and Tasmania 2014, p.4). Accordingly, to capture these types of concerns, in this thesis the fragmentation measure is the number of candidates at the Division or District level.

Electoral / Institutional model

As shown in Chapter Two, the rules governing the electoral system, such as registration requirements (in the US context), compulsory voting (Lijphart 1997) and compulsory enrolment and direct enrolment in Australia (Hoffman and Brent 2011) have an effect on turnout. As shown in Chapter Four, the thesis uses four institutional variables in model four: the rate of aggregate turnout in the Division or District, the rate of aggregate electoral enrolment, the rate of informal or spoiled ballots, and the number of early voting centres.

Is there a relationship between electoral enrolment procedures and turnout? In non-compulsory contexts, we know that registration requirements generally have a downward effect on turnout because the time to enrol and maintain one’s enrolment requires resources and time (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Accordingly, the literature demonstrated that measures to facilitate easier electoral enrolment, such as EDR, can improve turnout. Election Day registration allows people who wish to vote on Election Day but have not registered to do both in “one essentially continuous act” (Wolfinger, Highton, and Mullin 2005, p.3). However, looking at the US, the evidence is mixed. Knack and White (2000, p.29) found that
“the adoption of EDR is found to be associated with large and significant improvements in the turnout rates of young people relative to older persons, and of recent movers relative to nonmovers”. Yet they also found the adoption of EDR did not improve equality of representation across educational levels. Similarly, Burden et al (2012) found that EDR has a more consequential, positive effect on turnout when considered as part of a reform package alongside early voting.

The Australian evidence about compulsory enrolment and EDR is limited but suggests a positive relationship between EDR and turnout. When the Victorian Parliament introduced enhanced provisional voting measures in Victoria for the 2010 Victorian state election (Parliament of Victoria 2012, p.vi), allowing people who could prove their identity to enrol ‘on-the-day’ to cast a provisional vote (which would be later checked by the VEC for eligibility), approximately 30,000 votes were admitted to the final count which otherwise would not have been. However, there have been attempts by political parties to suppress electoral enrolment. Most famously, in 2006 the then Howard Liberal government, in controversial circumstances, legislated to close the electoral roll significantly earlier once an election was called. After the campaign began new voters had until 8pm on the day the writs were issued to lodge their enrolment, with existing electors only having three days to update their details. The legislation was eventually struck down by the High Court in Rowe vs Electoral Commissioner (2010 HCA 46). Regarding compulsory enrolment, the dynamic is more nuanced. Compulsory enrolment ensures a more complete electoral roll but the VEC has described the financial costs associated with enforcement; some unenrolled electors often fight the VEC, taking the case to the Magistrate’s Court and then completing an enrolment form on the court’s steps, thereby avoiding a penalty. Each court action costs the VEC thousands of dollars (VEC 2013, p.2)

There is as complex relationship between informal voting and turnout. In an earlier analysis, McAllister and Makkai (1992, p.23) found that the comparatively high level of informal votes in Australia can be explained “by the interaction between compulsory voting, the complexity of the electoral system, and by the presence of large numbers of immigrants within the electorate”. Building on newer research conducted by the AEC (2014) and the VEC (2015), we know that informal voting in Australia is correlated with Divisions and Districts with high proportions of migrants and electors for whom English is not their first language. It is too difficult to extrapolate these results to general turnout, or to presuppose that multicultural electoral districts experience lower voter turnout. Green (2011) has
examined the claim, widely promulgated by conservative British commentators during the unsuccessful 2011 UK referendum on the adoption of the alternative vote, that preferential voting systems lower turnout because they are more complex than first-past-the post and result in higher levels of voter confusion and costs (Green 2011, p.2). He argued “no literature in eight decades of Australian political science” has linked the alternative vote to lower turnout.

The final electoral institutional explanatory variable in the regression models is the number of early voting centres in an electorate. At one level, as for candidates, there would seem to be an intuitive relationship between this variable and voting: more voting sites would lead to greater turnout, particularly in a non-compulsory voting context and in relation to early voting, especially if convenience is one of the primary reasons cited for early voting by electors. But as demonstrated earlier, Burden et al (2012), Larocca and Klemanski (2011) and Highton (2004) reported that early voting actually depresses turnout by robbing Election Day of some of its stimulating, mobilising attributes. However, few scholars have explored this relationship at the sub-national and administrative levels. Fullmer (2013) examined local implementation of early voting centres at the 2008 and 2012 US presidential elections. He found that early voting sites generally “have a significant and positive relationship with voter turnout when examined at the county level” (Fullmer 2015, p.81). Substantively, he found that “adding ten sites in a county of 10,000 voting-age residents increases turnout by several percentage points or more” (Fullmer 2015, p.82).

In contrast, Miller and Powell (2015, p.29) reported no relationship between early voting in person and people with disabilities, or making voting more accessible for disabled voters stimulated turnout amongst this community. If more sites are correlated with early voting as Fullmer argued, then we would expect additional voting opportunities to stimulate participation amongst those with physical disabilities. Evidence from Victoria suggests otherwise. In Victoria the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) was amended in 2006 to allow Victorians with a physical or motor disability to vote early on electronic vote kiosks at early voting centres across the state. The location of these centres is determined by the VEC in consultation with peak advocacy organisations. Nonetheless at the 2014 Victorian state election only 942 early votes were recorded at the accessibility centres. This supports the idea
that providing dedicated early voting channels for electors with special needs may not directly stimulate turnout.\footnote{Securing accessible Election Day and early voting polling places is a perennial issue for Australia’s electoral commissions; see; (Parliament of Victoria 2012; 2015).}

Model summary

The voting models outlined above will allow us to estimate Division and District level effects on early voting in person at the 10 elections in this thesis. Consistent with this thesis’ first research question, the thesis is primarily interested in examining whether Australia’s early voting reforms have stimulated turnout amongst those already likely to vote, or whether they have had the effect of flattening the electorate as theorised by Lijphart (1997) in relation to the second-order effects of compulsory voting. Before concluding this chapter, what does the extant early voting literature say about the types of populations stimulated by early voting reforms?

The demography of early voting – convenience voting, non-American and Australian perspectives

There is no clear cut answer in the literature about who votes early in person. As Gronke et al noted this “ambiguity creates a demand for new empirical research on the topic” (Gronke et al 2007).

In the US convenience voting literature, traditionally, it was thought that early voting appealed to the resource rich. As noted by Weaver (2015, p.2) the bulk of the earlier critical literature has concluded that convenience voters, or those voting early in person, are more likely to be politically informed, wealthier and better educated – in other words, white electors tend to have these traits contrasted to African Americans and minority groups (Alvarez et al 2009); Berinsky 2005).\footnote{According to Thrasher (2017, p.1), white people have “12 times the wealth of black people and “black families would need to work 228 years to build the wealth of white families”.

Turning once again to Berinsky’s (2005) finding about electoral reforms “exacerbating existing socio-economic biases in the electorate”, several studies have demonstrated that compositionally, early voters and absentee voters in the US tend to be wealthier and politically knowledgeable (Patterson and Caldeira 1985; Oliver 1996). Survey data have suggested that higher income, older and conservative voters are more likely to absentee vote (Cook, 1991; Oliver, 1996) and vote early in person (Stein 1998). In Stein’s (1998) study of early voters in Texas early voters demonstrated a greater interest in politics and stronger partisan and ideological ties than Election Day voters.
Therefore, “relaxing absentee requirements may only serve to increase voting among the groups already most likely to participate” (Karp and Banducci 2000, p.184). This hypothesis is consistent with the idea that easier electoral registration, early voting (Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997), and postal elections (Karp and Banducci 2000) provide a “convenience for those already likely to vote by virtue of their education, age, and income rather than attracting the disadvantaged to the polls (Karp and Banducci 2000, p.185). Neely and Richardson (2001, p.389) summarised this research well:

The results of the logistic regression analysis provide no support for the mobilisation effect…Likewise, voters with low political efficacy, little interest in the campaign, and no strong partisan attachment did not appear to take advantage of early voting. On the contrary, the attitudinal factors suggest more support for the convenience effect.

In contrast, recent research suggests that African Americans are more likely to vote early in person than white electors. The Brennan Centre for Justice at the New York University School of Law has advocated strongly for reformed and expanded early voting access. In the US the fact remains that most Americans have to vote on a Tuesday, representing a substantial cost to lower-income electors who are unable to secure time off work to vote. Though 32 states now permit early voting in person, several have attempted to restrict access to early voting, as seen in Chapter Two. Evidence has suggested this has disadvantaged the African American electorate. In North Carolina, the legislature cut seven early voting days, removing times that were popular among African Americans. Among these “the Sunday before the election, used by churchgoers for a “Souls to the Polls” drive (Brennan Centre 2016, p.2). In the prior election, “more than one-quarter of all African-American voters in the state had voted on those days”. In Ohio, Weaver and Gill (2015, p.2) found that African Americans at the 2008 US general elections utilised early voting at substantially higher rates than White voters during both elections, demonstrating that partisan attempts in Ohio to limit early voting had a clear racial effect. In Florida, which curtailed early voting access just prior to the 2012 US presidential election, Gronke and Stewart (2013) documented a similar effect.

Recently, a more nuanced position has developed which accepts that early voters are perhaps easier to mobilise, but with qualifications. Using a national survey but excluding Oregon (due to the state using vote-by-mail only) Alvarez et al (2012, p.249) reported that not all convenience voters are the same, with differences between vote choice and output. In short,
they found that early voters may not be as resource rich as one thought, and little support for the link between partisanship and early voters. Kropf (2012) found that early voters had been registered to vote longer than other voters but may not have been habitual voters regardless.

Regarding the resource variables in the regression models, there are mixed findings in the US literature. While education is positively related to early voting (Gronke and Toffey 2008, p.503; Barreto et al 2006, p.224), there are no data on the effects of employment. Assuming that income, as hypothesised earlier, is strongly related to employment, then the literature demonstrated that income is positively associated with early voting (Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997, p.67). As noted earlier this represents a clear gap in the convenience voting research and in particular the Australian literature, given that employment is cited as one of the top two reasons for voting early in the small-sample survey data on early voters completed for the VEC by Colmar Brunton (2007).

In short, there is no consensus around the compositional effects of early voting reforms. Yet the weight of evidence is slightly tilted in favour of the hypothesis that early voters may have greater resources than other electors. However, unique, elections-specific circumstances may have mobilised minorities and disadvantage groups to vote early.

Non-US perspectives

There is a growing literature assessing the effects of early voting in other established democracies, focusing on Western Europe and Canada. In a cross national study Blais (2008) found that turnout is higher among registered voters. Regarding Switzerland, Luechinger et al (2006) estimated the effect of postal voting in Swiss cantons over a 30 year period and found that it had a slightly positive effect on turnout, averaging 4.1 percent. In Canada, Blais et al (2007, p.19) examined the 2006 Canadian Election Study data and found that those who use advance polls tend to be older, have more political interest, more likely to identify with, and to have been contacted by, a political party. Furthermore, they suggest that income and education does not have an effect on whether one is likely to go to advance polls. Corresponding to recent findings about the limits of compulsion in urban settings (Hoffman and Larizidis 2013) the authors also reported that urban electors were more likely to have used advance polls, compared to those in rural areas.
Australia

There is little research into who votes early at Australian federal or state elections. A general finding in the Australian electoral studies literature corresponds to postal voting, not early voting. It is thought that postal votes generally favour the Coalition compared to Labor. The evidence for this proposal is mostly historical. As noted by Hughes (2001, p.218), since its foundation Labor has had a number of issues with several administrative aspects of the Australian electoral system, including postal voting. The Fisher Labor government repealed postal voting in 1911 because it felt that “non-Labor parties were the major beneficiaries of postal votes” (Hughes 2001, p.218). To this end, Labor, feeling that it need to improve its capacity to harvest postal votes, introduced an amendment to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cwth) which allowed political parties to send out postal applications – the logic behind this was that the Labor had better on-the-ground support than the Coalition and this strategy, and its networks, might have given them some sort of electoral advantage (Hughes 2001, p.219). Further, there is also some support for this proposition in publicly available data from Australian electoral commissions. It is a well-known fact that most postal voting applications are lodged by older Australians; in a position paper on party involvement in the postal voting process, the VEC explained how older citizens might be confused by an application from a political party, thinking that it had actually been sent by the electoral commission (VEC 2015). Chapter Ten provides, for the first time in the Australian electoral literature, data from an Australian electoral roll showing the age profile of early voters at an Australian election.

In addition, even less is known about who might be early voting in person. There are two relevant studies. In 2014 the AEC found that pre-poll ordinary votes, or votes cast in an elector’s Home Division, are correlated with age. Specifically, Divisions which had “very high (more than one standard deviation above the mean) proportions of population aged 60 and above were 7.6 times more likely in 2010 and 6.6 times more likely in 2013 to have high levels of pre-poll ordinary votes” (AEC 2014, p.6). Contextualised, pre-poll ordinary votes are those cast in an elector’s home Division; we can say that older people who vote early tend to vote closer to home. Nevertheless, as relevant as these findings are, the AEC’s data is not publicly available, making replication difficult. In addition, Reader (2014b, p.3) found a relationship between early voting at 2006, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections and the level of population change. He argued that electors voting early in person were more mobile and therefore affluent. Nonetheless his analysis was limited to Victoria only and at the
aggregate-level, so we cannot reliably generalise these findings to other Australian jurisdictions.

Using the existing literature, how might we model the effects of administrative changes to turnout laws in Australia? Election laws, including administrative laws, that increase access to the ballot should have the greatest effect on electors who are on what Burden et al (2012) and Highton (2004) call the “turnout bubble”, that is, neither highly likely to vote nor to abstain. Citizens “who are almost certain to cast a ballot will not be affected by marginal changes in the rules; they will vote regardless” (Burden et al 2012). Similarly, low-likelihood voters may simply be beyond the reach of any voting reforms. Moreover, electoral reforms either “bring in new voters or...increase turnout from those reforms that simply provide alternative opportunities for voters who would cast a ballot under almost any set of rules” (Burden et al 2012, p.97).

Conclusions and unanswered research questions

This chapter has situated the thesis’ second research question in the voter turnout literature. The chapter first established why electoral participation, and particularly voting, is important, and why voting before Election Day poses a temporal challenge to traditional conceptions of electoral participation as theorised by Thompson (2004). Like other established democracies, Australia has experienced declining rates of voter turnout at periodic elections. Of the three most common, attempted remedies – direct registration, education and expanding access to the ballot – the impact of early voting in turnout is hotly contested in the US convenience voting literature. As shown throughout this chapter, there is a rich scholarship examining the compositional effects of early voting reforms in the US. However, there is no consensus about who votes early. Older research has reinforced Wolfinger and Rosenstone’s (1980) findings that voting is a function of resources, leading to the conclusion that early voting reforms have exacerbated existing socio-economic biases in the US electorate (Berinsky 2005). But newer research, as well as reformist efforts from organisations like the Brennan Centre for Justice who have advocated expanded opportunities to vote, demonstrate that early voting may have stimulated minority and African American participation, especially in Ohio, North Carolina and Florida. These studies show a more nuanced picture of early voting participation.

There is also a clear gap in the Australian electoral literature about who is voting early. Due to this gap, it is difficult to hypothesise what variables might influence early voting in
Australia – extant empirical findings offer few insights as to whether early voters are already those voting, or the new mobilised. Therefore, one of this thesis’ original contributions to knowledge is to propose a model for estimating the District-level demographic correlates of early voting at Australian elections. While the model offers District-level insights only into early voting and socio-economic status, these are some of the first empirical insights into the impact of administrative electoral reforms on voter turnout at Australian federal and state elections.

Hypotheses

Accordingly, the thesis proposes the following hypothesis:

1. At the District level, that early voting is negatively associated with socio-economic factors consistent with the Resource Model – employment and tertiary education.

The rationale behind this hypothesis is that there is no consensus in the US literature about the compositional effects of early voting reforms, and under compulsory voting we would expect administrative electoral reforms to ‘iron out’ turnout by stimulating under-represented groups.

The next chapter, Chapter Four, outlines the thesis’ methodology. It details the thesis’ mixed method design, and other methodological considerations. It also establishes the framework for assessing and explaining early voting reforms at federal, NSW and Victorian elections from 2002-2015, and operationalises the four voter turnout models theorised in this chapter.
Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter describes the thesis’ research design and the qualitative and quantitative methodologies used to investigate the thesis’ first and second research questions respectively. This thesis uses a mixed methods research design (Creswell 2003; Mertens 2005; Mingers and Gill 1997; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). Accordingly, the chapter begins by describing the mixed methods research methodology, the key features of the design and debates about research processes. It then outlines the thesis’ sequential exploratory research design, adapted from Creswell (2003). Following this the chapter then outlines the qualitative framework, operationalising the assessment framework, outlining each barrier and the interview data collection process. The chapter then outlines the quantitative framework, operationalising the four models of voter turnout and explaining the modelling techniques used in Chapters Six, Eight and Ten.

Mixed methods research design – background

Mixed methods research designs use both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single research project to gather and analyse data. Mixed methods arose as counter-argument to the ‘paradigm wars’ of the 20th century, although scholars had used multiple methods to study phenomenon long before this (Maxcy 2003; King, Keohane and Verba (1994)). Creswell (1994, p.176) identified several schools of thought in the paradigm debate or so-called ‘paradigm wars’. At one end of the “debate are the ‘purists’ who assert paradigms and methods should not be mixed” (Cameron 2009, p.142). Another school of thought are the ‘situationalists’ who contend that certain methods can be used in specific situations. In direct opposition to the ‘purists’ are the pragmatists who argued against a false dichotomy between the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms and advocate for the efficient use of both approaches” (Cameron 2009, p.142). From the field, several scholars have emerged as methodologists or mixed methods theorists, notably (Creswell 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark 2007; Miles and Huberman 1994; Morgan 1998; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003), developing typologies and frameworks for mixed methods research.

How relevant is mixed methods design to electoral studies?

Political scientists, like social scientists, like to use mixed methods. Homing in on election studies, mixed methods are popular. In the Australian context, Kelly (2008; 2012) employed a mixed methods research design to assess the fairness of Australian electoral reforms at the
national and state level against international standards for good electoral governance (Kelly 2012, p.1). Kelly’s design assimilated qualitative data, in the form of semi-structured interviews with Australian electoral officials, and quantitative assessment frameworks, including Gallagher’s Least Squares index for measuring the disproportionality of electoral outcomes (Kelly 2012, p.14). Internationally, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, several scholars of electoral reform have embraced mixed methods research designs, echoing calls for analytical eclecticism when explaining electoral reform. Norris’ policy cycle (1995; 2009) model utilised rational choice and historical comparative accounts for explaining policy making, constituting reform “within a broader environment in each country, including the role of path-dependent historical traditions, the social structure and culture and the economic structure” (Norris 2009, p.7).

In the early voting and convenience voting literature, there is emerging interest in mixed methods. Most recently, Fullmer (2013) studied the rise of convenience voting in the US. In addition to his empirical tests, which are discussed in Chapter Three, Fullmer’s research documented “the birth and development of early voting laws, utilising state legislative archives, local media accounts, and conversations with country electoral officials, to identify how and why these policies emerged over the course of two decades” (Fullmer 2013, p.iii). In this way, Fullmer’s study is methodologically similar to the design in this thesis, although it is worth mentioning that his research does not specifically mention a mixed methods typology. Nevertheless, Fullmer’s study is one of the few to take up the challenge, issued by one of the US’s leading convenience voting researchers, Gronke et al (2008), to investigate early voting from a ‘non-turnout’, multidisciplinary perspective, focusing on the combined effects of legislation, normative traditions and election technology on early voting turnout (Gronke et al 2008, p.451). Gronke’s challenge and Fullmer’s qualitative findings suggest there is a methodological and discipline-specific value in investigating early voting in person in Australia using a mixed methods design. By doing so, the thesis’ makes an original contribution to the multi-paradigmatic mixed methods research, and to Australian electoral studies.

**Research design – sequential exploratory model**

This thesis adapts Creswell’s (2003) typology (as later developed by Creswell and Plano Clark 2007) and theoretical framework. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) built on Creswell’s earlier work in terms of mixed methods research designs and have developed a four-part
typology. These four major mixed methods research design types are classified using categories “associated with variants, timing, weighting and mix (Cameron 2009, p.144). As seen in table 4.1, the four designs are: triangulation; embedded; explanatory; and exploratory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design type</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Mix</th>
<th>Weighting / Notation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Concurrent: quantitative and qualitative at the same time</td>
<td>Merge the data during interpretation or analysis</td>
<td>QUAN + QUAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded</td>
<td>Concurrent and sequential</td>
<td>Embed one type of data within a larger design using the other type of data</td>
<td>QUAN (qual) or QUAL (quan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory (a)</td>
<td>Sequential: Quantitative followed by qualitative</td>
<td>Connect the data between the two phases</td>
<td>Quan – qual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory (b)</td>
<td>Sequential: Qualitative followed by qualitative</td>
<td>Connect the data between the two phases</td>
<td>Qual – quan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark 2007, p.85; Cameron 2009, p.145).

The thesis adapts Creswell’s second exploratory model, or ‘sequential exploratory method b’ in table 4.1. Procedurally, as documented by Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006) in this design, a researcher first collects and analyses the qualitative data. The “qualitative (text) data are collected and analysed [first] in the sequence and help explain, or elaborate on, the quantitative results obtained in the second phase” (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick 2006, p.3). The second, quantitative, phase builds on the first, qualitative, phase, and the two phases are connected in the intermediate stage in the study. The rationale for this approach is that the qualitative data and findings and their subsequent analysis contribute to a general understanding of the variables and quantitative research problem. Moreover, the “qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants’ views in more depth” (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998; Creswell 2003).

The results of the blending of both phases are discussed in a dedicated conclusion at the end of Chapters Six, Eight and Ten, and throughout the Conclusion.

Visual model / procedures

The thesis also contextualises the stages of the sequential exploratory approach in a visual diagram. Mixed-methods scholars agree about the value of providing a visual model of procedures (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Creswell et al 2003; Creswell 1994). Some
authors (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Creswell et al 2003) provided a visual presentation of major mixed methods designs. Graphical representations help both the researcher to visualise their design and procedural steps, and assist readers to logically follow the course of the research. Figure 4.1 is a visual ‘aid’ for reference for this thesis’ research design.

*Justifications and limitations*

There are over forty different variations of the mixed methods design in the extant literature (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). Why then is the sequential exploratory approach suitable for this study?

In general terms, the sequential exploratory approach is the most appropriate mixed methods strategy to robustly explore a new and emerging phenomenon. According to Creswell (2003), this strategy is useful when developing and testing a new instrument, or applying existing theoretical models to a new or understudied phenomenon in a particular field. This classification accords strongly with critical understanding of early voting in person at Australian elections. As documented in Chapter Two, while there has been some interest in the growth of early voting at Australian elections in recent years (Orr 2014; AEC 2014; Reader 2015; Chen 2015), we know little about early voting as an electoral reform, why early voting reforms have been introduced and how and whether early voting has influenced turnout at Australian elections. Given this, and the fact that several interview respondents, notably Members of Parliament, also admitted that the growth of early voting in person had ‘crept up’ on most people involved in Australian politics (Phelps 2014, p.4), we can have confidence in the appropriateness of the sequential exploratory approach.

Another strength of the design is that it allows the researcher to assess whether themes from the qualitative phase generalise to a population (Creswell 2003), allowing the researcher to develop an instrument / model. As shown in Chapters Five, Seven and Nine, respondents provided evidence about several, jurisdiction-specific and generalised themes. For instance, Victorian respondents unanimously agreed that Melbourne’s rapid population growth over the past decade may have contributed to early voting turnout; accordingly, address change is theorised in the Social-Cultural model. For NSW, several respondents also discussed iVote, NSW’s remote voting system, and suggested that the significant expansion of the service at the 2015 NSW state election may have attracted electors from higher socio-economic backgrounds to vote on the internet (Ward 2014, p.4; Rhiannon 2014, p.9). Deciding which variables to include in the quantitative models can be problematic under the sequential
exploratory design (Creswell 2003). However, due to the extant literature, this was not a problem.\textsuperscript{28}

Nevertheless, mixed methods is not a panacea for the methodological ‘extremes’ of the qualitative or quantitative approach. The appropriate choice of methods depends on the nature of the inquiry. As noted by Thaler (2015, p.14), “quantitative research is more useful for capturing patterns in the variation of [a phenomenon] and understanding its distribution and correlates”. Conversely, according to Creswell (2003, p.22) “qualitative research is exploratory and is useful when the researcher does not know what variables to examine…this approach may be needed because the topic is new”, or existing theories do not apply to the same population. The thesis argues this is the case regarding Australia’s early voting reforms from 2002 to 2015. We do not know how existing voter turnout theories apply to early voting in Australia, or jurisdictions with compulsory. There is also no clear association between socio-economic determinants of voter turnout and early voting at Australian elections. Thus a mixed methods design captures the best of both approaches, but as a precaution, we should view mixed methods as “complementary, rather than corroborating” (2009, p.6).

Mixed methods designs also require considerable resources – time, financial and logistical – and command of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. A project will take extra time “because of the need to collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data” (Creswell 2003, p.23). It is difficult to dispute these claims. However, being ‘around’ electoral research and administration through my employment with the Parliament of Victoria provided some advantage in qualitative data collection, given my familiarity with key primary and secondary sources of evidence, including research techniques like searching Hansard. On occasions, my research complimented my work at Parliament and vice versa – such overlaps blurred the conceptual distance between study and employment, and sped up the research.

\textsuperscript{28} On a practical level, the design also suited data collection practices. During the preliminary stages of this project I anticipated several challenges securing 20 elite-level interviews with electoral commissioners and members of Parliament. Scheduling was a major concern. Although I work at the Parliament of Victoria – and knew some of the respondents professionally – cancellations were expected, scheduling conflicts and ‘general unavailability’. Further, due to the timing of my human ethics protocol approval from Swinburne University of Technology, and unrelated work commitments, interviews commenced in late 2013/early 2014; this period corresponded with a federal election an election year in Victoria. Due to these factors, data collection commenced promptly. By early 2014 most interviews were complete, and I commenced preliminary data analysis. These experiences support Creswell’s contention that a researcher’s personal experiences and training play a large role in the logistical and administrative considerations underpinning mixed methods research (Creswell 2003, p.22).
Further, securing and conducting effective elite interviews poses a unique set of challenges, many of which have been described in seminal works by Aberbach and Rockman (2002). I am fortunate to have a strong professional network in the fields of electoral administration federally, in NSW and Victoria, and to have professional relationships with some of the respondents. Due to this I was confident of securing interviews with the majority of the sample. In turn, this freed up considerable time for quantitative research, pilot testing, coding, and building the dataset. This also assisted the choice of the three jurisdiction case selection.
Figure 4.1: Visual representation of sequential exploratory design

**Phase**

1. **Qualitative data collection**
   - Review of primary sources and secondary sources, including Harvard, archival research, review of electoral commission reports, reports of Australian parliament's electoral matters committees.
   - 21 semi-structured interviews with electoral:
     - Critical assessment of electoral reform assessment from events, based on secondary literature and evidence of primary sources.
     - Using NVivo, identifying key themes in interview transcripts, based on any electoral reform assessment model, then identifying jurisdiction-specific drivers and agents behind early voting reform.

2. **Qualitative data analysis**
   - Creation of a draft electoral reform assessment model, tools for classifying electoral reform. Test document contributions to this analysis.
   - Using NVivo, identifying contextual quotes from interview transcripts to assist qualitative analysis context variable selection.

3. **Connecting qualitative and quantitative phases**
   - Potential ordinary least square models identified.
   - Important contextual background to early voting development in three jurisdictions, used to inform interpretation and discussion of regression results.

4. **Quantitative data collection**
   - Based on 10 elections with study period. For independent variables, ABS Community Profile data for 128.1 over House Divisions districts, aggregate socio-economic and cultural datasets. For dependent variable, electoral data from AEC, NSWEC and VEC, sourced from virtual tally rooms and directly from commissions.

5. **Quantitative data analysis**
   - Descriptive statistics, OLS model outcomes for 10 elections, based on four models selected based on qualitative phases and voter turnout literature.
   - Multinomial logistic regression parameter estimates, other individual insights into early voters at 2010 Victorian state election.

6. **Integration: qualitative and quantitative phases**
   - Interpretation combining results from qualitative and quantitative phases to explain and explicate phenomena early voting in person at Australian elections.
   - Findings, conclusions about two research questions.
   - Implications for theory of electoral reform and voter turnout convenience voting.
   - Implications for policy and practice.
   - Limitations, implications for further research.
Phase One: Qualitative component, assessing and explaining electoral reforms introducing early voting for federal elections, NSW and Victorian state elections

The qualitative phase of this study is premised on assessing the historical, contextual and institutional factors behind early voting reforms for federal elections, NSW elections and Victorian elections from 2002 to 2015. The qualitative phase can be separated into two sections: the first develops an assessment framework for Australia’s early voting reforms, based on current approaches in the electoral reform literature merging rational choice and historical institutionalist approaches (Rahat and Lazaar 2011; Norris 2009; Jacobs and Leyenar 2011). The second section compliments the framework with data from a semi-structured interview process.

Section One: Assessment framework for Australian early voting reforms

As examined in Chapter Two, debate in the electoral reform literature has coalesced around ‘major’ electoral reform, both in emerging and established democracies. Referring to Lijphart’s four-dimensions (1994, p.3), major reforms are ones that substantially affect the “electoral formula, the district magnitude, the assembly size and/or the electoral threshold”. Of the competing explanatory theories, there is a general consensus in the electoral reform literature that the historical comparative approach offers a more complete analytical framework for assessing electoral system reform, given that it synthesises elements of rational choice theory and accounts for the unique historical, social and cultural circumstances in each country assessed (Rahat 2011). However, no single framework is appropriate for every country. There are open questions posed by the literature as to whether prevailing explanations for electoral system reform can be applied to minor and technical reforms (Renwick 2010, p.61; Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011). As Chapter Two demonstrated, there are several gaps in the early voting and Australian electoral reform literature; the US-centric early voting literature is heavily focused on the impact of early voting reforms on voter turnout, meaning only few scholars have assessed the drivers of early voting reforms from a theoretical perspective that we can equate with existing approaches. In addition, Australian electoral reform studies focus mainly on systemic reforms, such as compulsory voting and preferential voting. Apart from some recent studies on direct enrolment little is known about what prompts administrative electoral reforms, including early voting in person, and the impact of Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees and electoral commissions on administrative reforms to access to the ballot like early voting.
These questions call for an assessment framework which, like the historical comparative approach, is flexible enough to assess partisan impacts on reform, the impact of historical, social and path dependent processes, and the unique aspects of Australia’s electoral institutions. The thesis proposes a modified assessment framework for assessing the historical, contextual and institutional factors behind early voting reforms for federal, NSW and Victorian elections from 2002 to 2015. The framework has two components; a definitional tool and the assessment framework.

**Definition**

The first step involves establishing what counts as a ‘minor’ and ‘technical’ reform. Why is this necessary? The first reason relates to how Australia’s early voting reforms have been enacted. As shown in Chapters Five, Seven and Nine, legislative reforms to early voting did not happen in isolation. Many formed part of a larger legislation package. Understanding the package of reforms provides important contextual information about the reform process, and is consistent with other approaches in the literature (Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011, p.497).

Another reason is that definitions of the degree of electoral reform are arbitrary, as discussed in Chapter Two. Correspondingly, there is a debate in the limited scholarship about minor reform and what defines it (Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011; James 2013). Lijphart noted that his 20 percent criterion was simply a cut-off he nominated at the time of his seminal study to determine what constituted a new electoral system. While some scholars, such as Katz (2005, p.70), have argued that it is “unproductive” to try and categorise the types of reforms being considered, there is a good reason for this. Minor reforms mean different things to different scholars. The prevailing approach has been for ‘in country’ experts to assess what is a minor electoral reform in a particular country’s electoral system (Mitchell and Gallagher 2005, p.21). As a result, there is no agreed framework for comparative study of minor reforms, and there are few studies focusing on the drivers of early voting reforms, such as James (2013), Biggers and Hanmer (2015) and Gronke and Stewart (2013) which are directly comparable. While there are considerable differences between US, West European and Australian early voting practices, study of this important administrative reform requires a degree of uniformity, as characterised by systemic election studies. Accordingly, table 4.2 classifies electoral reform (Jacobs and Leyenaar (2011), situating early voting reforms within an appropriate descriptor.
Table 4.2: Definition table, electoral reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of legislative reform</th>
<th>Description of reform</th>
<th>Major reform</th>
<th>Minor reform</th>
<th>Technical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportionality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>Early voting reforms</td>
<td>Expanding voting by creating a new form of early voting, such as electronic voting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>changing the criteria for access to early voting. Also, changes to length of early voting period.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral procedures</td>
<td>Early voting reforms</td>
<td>Altering the criteria for early voting and electronic voting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>changing the criteria for early voting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


For the purposes of this study, the thesis defines the legislation in Chapters Five, Seven and Nine governing access to early voting in person as minor reforms in the inclusiveness and electoral procedures dimensions. Principally, this is because the reforms, when they were introduced, affected less than 20 percent of the electorate – hence following Lijphart’s 20 percent rule. The thesis assesses reforms that:

a) Either introduced or amended the criteria governing access to early voting in person. Each of the three jurisdictions in this thesis has altered, amended or at least debated altering the criteria determining which electors can access early voting services since 2002;

b) Affected the length of the early voting period; the standard early voting period for federal, NSW and Victorian elections has been two weeks (10 working days) since the early 2000s. However, there have been debates as to the appropriateness of this period, including whether it should be lengthened or curtailed; and

c) Introduced another form of access to early voting in person, or mode of early voting. The thesis is specifically interested in the introduction of iVote, NSW’s remote voting system, in 2011. iVote falls under the 20 percent criterion for electoral procedures despite the fact that iVote increased significantly at the 2015 NSW state election (286,000 iVotes) compared to the 2011 NSW state election (45,000 iVotes). In fact, in 2015 the NSW Electoral Commission estimated that iVote could only be used by
around 150,000 electors, or approximately four to five percent of the total NSW electoral roll (NSW Electoral Commission 2015).

As Massicotte et al (2004, p.4) noted “electoral systems are undoubtedly a major component of electoral laws, but they are only one component”. Jacobs and Leyenaar (2011, p.497) also observed that “electoral procedures [is] still fairly underdeveloped. It may well be that more reforms merit the label ‘minor’ or ‘major’”. In other words, it is important to remember there are no ‘hard and fast’ rules in this field, and that the typology may necessarily be different to other scholars.

Assessment framework

The second component of the assessment framework is the framework itself. Adapting Rahat and Hazan’s (2011, p.479) ‘barriers to reform’ model and Norris’s (2009, p.5) policy cycle model, the thesis asks: what stops reform? What factors could have prevented or delayed Australia’s early voting reforms? As noted in Chapter Two, Renwick (2010) and Katz (2007) have argued, as have Rahat and Hazan (2011) that we can learn just as much about electoral reform from attempted electoral reform as we can from successful electoral reform. Table 4.3 lists the six barriers in the framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3: ‘Barriers to reform’/policy cycle assessment framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The procedural superiority of the status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Political tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The systemic balance and efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Actors’ vested interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parliamentary oversight of electoral administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Role of electoral commission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Rahat and Hazan (2011, p.479); Jacobs and Leyenaar (2011, p.504); Norris (2009, p.p.1-10)
What does each barrier mean?

The procedural superiority of the status quo assumes electoral institutions are conservative. Both systemic and minor electoral reforms must overcome the status quo. However, as Renwick (2010) argued, the barriers to minor and technical reform should be less difficult to surmount, or at least less entrenched.

Political tradition relates to the Lijphart’s (1994) notion of institutionalism and the idea a country’s electoral system is linked to its political, historical and cultural experiences. Accordingly, when considering electoral system reform, we should expect electoral reform to occur following a period of major political and social change. Have minor and technical reforms to early voting in person for federal, NSW and Victorian elections followed this pattern? Unlike Rahat and Hazan (2010), the political tradition barrier is amalgamated, following a similar treatment in Jacobs and Leyenaar’s analysis (2011, p.504). Following them the thesis merges the ‘political culture’ and ‘social history’ barriers proposed by Rahat and Hazan (2011) to form an aggregated ‘political tradition’ barrier. The rationale stems from Norris’ (2009, p.7) policy cycle model. As seen in Chapter Two, Norris reasoned that electoral reforms involve “multiple actors as players in the sequential policy making process…all activity is understood to occur within a broader environment within each country, including the role of path-dependent historical traditions, the social structure and culture, and economic structure” (Norris 2009, p.7). Through aggregation, this barrier permits assessment of the political and social conditions affecting the development of electoral legislation around early voting.

The systemic balance and efficiency refers to the idea, as discussed in Chapter Two that electoral systems change when they produce ‘inefficient’ results (Colomer 2004; Shugart 2001). According to Shugart (2001, p.25) an “efficient electoral system is one…that succeeds in translating the will of the majority of voters into policies”. An inefficient system creates conditions where politicians and electors demand change; a recent, Australian based example is the 2015/2016 debate about Senate voting reform to create a more transparent Senate electoral system. Accordingly, ‘minor’ reform inefficiency might involve an electoral procedure making it more difficult for electors to cast their vote, or that a technical procedure requires clarification so that it is in step with contemporary electoral practice. As we shall see in Chapters Five, Seven and Nine, several administrative inefficiencies prompted reform to early voting procedures at federal elections, NSW and Victoria elections.
Actors’ vested interests permits assessment of the traditional rational choice approach to electoral reform. Rational choice explanations for reform were evaluated in Chapter Two but can be summarised again by Benoit (2004, p.365): “an electoral system should cease to change when the party / parties with the power to change the system do not expect to gain seats by doing so”. However, as noted in Chapter Two, rational choice theory seeks to provide an elegant, catch all explanation for electoral system reform which largely ignores important contextual and historical information, particularly at the case study level. Nonetheless, the strength of historical comparative assessment frameworks is accounting for these factors, while accepting that rational choice partisanship is still a pervasive explanation for electoral reform. Given the relative lack of discussion in the Australian electoral reform literature about the partisan nature of administrative electoral reforms (notwithstanding discussion about direct enrolment (Hoffman and Brent 2011), and the gap in the literature about Australian early voting reforms, this barrier has considerable value.

The thesis’ second modification to Rahat and Hazan’s framework involves introducing a barrier focused on parliamentary oversight of electoral administration. As discussed in Chapter Two, the three jurisdictions in this thesis all have dedicated parliamentary electoral matters committee – the Commonwealth JSCEM, the NSW JSCEM and the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee. According to Kelly (2008) and Reader (2014a), these committees are unique in Australian and international electoral governance. Public participation in determining the rules of elections is considered a fundamental facet of good electoral governance (ACE Project 2016). As discussed in Chapter Two, there is also a latent debate around whether Australia’s electoral matters committee act as arbiters of electoral reform, influencing, and endorsing, electoral reforms and promoting wide, public debate about electoral issues (Reader 2014b, p.2). By including this measure, the thesis asks: what role have Australia’s electoral matters committees played in reforms introducing early voting? This discussion makes an original contribution to the Australian electoral reform literature, the effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Westminster systems, and, apart from Kelly’s (2012) study, studies examining Australian parliamentary oversight of electoral administration.

The final barrier makes a further, novel contribution to the electoral reform literature, the role of the electoral commission. Australia’s electoral commissions have an international reputation for being independent and providing best practice electoral administration practices. As seen in Chapter Two, apart from running elections, they also play a significant
role making electoral rules – in relation to early voting, this involves administering early voting centres, enforcing legislative provisions determining who can access early voting services, as well as other technical roles. By assessing this barrier, the thesis investigates how electoral commissions make these decisions. It also explores how these decisions are influenced by partisan actors, and whether electoral commissions’ rule-making functions has influenced the development of early voting and executive policy making (Tham 2013).

Case study procedure and types of evidence

The method for operationalising the assessment framework is the same for Chapters Five, Seven and Nine. Each chapter begins explaining and defining the electoral reforms/legislation/technical amendment for that jurisdiction, using table 4.3. The chapter then assesses the reform against each of the six barriers to reform, concluding with a visual representation of the barrier process, as in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Visual representation of assessment framework

Notes: Adapted from Rahat and Hazan (2011, p.479; Jacobs and Leyenaar 2011; Norris 2009, p.7).
* The boxes for each barrier are drawn the same size in the example diagram above. However, each box will be a different size, corresponding to the strength of the barrier relative to the reform.
** The unbroken line denotes a connection between the reform and the outcome/commentary. While this type of pictorial representation is not overly precise, it is consistent with Creswell’s (2003) and Morse’s (1991) principles for visual principle for mixed-methods research, and it is adopted here for ease of reference.
This approach was informed by Yin’s case study research methods. In terms of sources, each of the three jurisdictions thus represents a ‘case’, with each reform an episode within a case. According to Yin (2003, p.p.85-86) there are six possible sources of evidence for case studies: “documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts”. The case study’s unique strength is “its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations” (Yin 2003, p.8). To assess the drivers of Australia’s early voting reforms, the thesis draws on documents, archival records and interviews. The documents are primary reports from the electoral commission in each state, the reports of the parliamentary electoral matters committee and parliamentary debates. They provide in-depth insights into the perceptions of actors in electoral policymaking about early voting. To assess technical reforms to early voting in person, the thesis also draws on technical manuals and training materials provided by electoral commissions to senior electoral officials. These documents detail training procedures and other important information given to electoral officials, and provide a rich source of qualitative data about how electoral officials go about their work. Such data is crucial to forming views about how the electoral commission administered early voting, and how this changed over time.

Section Two; Qualitative interviews

For the thesis 20 semi-structured ‘elite’ interviews (borrowing the term ‘elite’ from Aberbach and Rockman 2002, p.673) were conducted from a sample of senior officials in Australian electoral administration, and members of Parliament in the federal, NSW and Victorian Parliaments who have sat on the Commonwealth JSCEM, NSW JSCEM and Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee.

Semi-structured interviews have a long history in political science and public administration. But interest in the views of Australia’s’ electoral commissioners is a newer feature of Australian electoral studies. Kelly’s (2008) study of the fairness of Australian electoral reforms used a semi-structured interview sample of 35 participants, including electoral commissioners and deputy electoral commissioners. Brent’s (2008) study of the history of Australia’s electoral administration also featured semi-structured interviews. Critical interest in the views of senior bureaucrats can be conceptually linked to Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman’s (1975) influential studies of the critical nexus between elected officials and members of the permanent bureaucracy in seven nations. They systematised many of the
techniques that are now considered standard in political science elite interviews, including analysis and coding techniques and strategies for developing rapport with respondents.

The rationale for selecting the two respondent groups has a common sense link to the thesis’ first research question. As demonstrated by Farrell and McAllister (2006), the development of electoral rules in Australia is tightly regulated by the parliamentary sphere and the electoral commission. Collating the views of those who decide electoral reforms – that is, parliamentarians – and those who enforce these rules, electoral commissions, offers a level of analytical granularity that documentary research cannot. These views complement the assessment framework’s finding, offering expert individual-level insights. Correspondingly, interviewing electoral commissioners will provide insights into barrier six. As noted by Tham (2013), there is emerging interest in the study of Australia’s electoral commissions, particularly given the strong interest in the institutional and administration role of electoral management authorities internationally (IDEA 2017; Wall 2005). In-depth interviews also provided an opportunity to explore the idea with electoral officials directly that, by making electoral rules, they also veer into providing policy advice. This research, and recent contributions by Warwick Gately AM, Victorian Electoral Commissioner, and Tom Rogers, Australian Electoral Commissioner, to the University of Melbourne’s Electoral Regulation Research Network, indicates that the gap around commission-centric research has begun to break down.

In addition, as documented in Chapter Two, little is known about Australia’s early voting reforms, including the views of policymakers. While Barrier Four in the framework assesses actors’ partisan interests, it cannot capture all contextual information. As demonstrated by Fullmer (2013), there is considerable value in interviewing politicians as to their perceptions about early voting reforms: Fortier (2006) found the same. By doing so, the thesis asks: has the move at the federal level, in NSW and Victoria toward flexible voting services formed part of a general strategy by either of Australia’s major political parties? Do the parties have any awareness of early voting in person? Evidence in the literature suggests a cursory knowledge; as noted in the Introduction, Noah Carroll, State Secretary, Victorian Labor, told the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee in 2013 that early voting had “crept up” on many people in politics (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.44). If this is the case, why has Victoria almost completely liberalised legislative access to early voting in person? Why has NSW introduced the world’s largest remote (early voting) platform? What role has partisan interest played?
The following section briefly outlines the mechanics of the interview process, including the target and sample populations, data collection and analysis, and measures to assure validity.

**Target population**

There was a natural target population for this research. Criterion sampling was employed.

A potential target population of 119 potential interview respondents was identified. Of the 119, 12 potential respondents were senior, paid electoral officials who held, or had previously held, the position of Australian electoral commissioner or deputy electoral commissioner, or an executive position in the board of the electoral commission, at either the Commonwealth level, in NSW or Victoria. The commissioner/deputy commissioner senior executive structure is shared by all nine Australian state and federal electoral commissions, leading over time to the creation of a talent pool of professional electoral administrators in Australia (Sawer 2001, p.16; Brent 2008). Indeed, several commissioners have held roles in multiple jurisdictions; Colin Barry, the NSW Electoral Commissioner from 2004 to 2015, was Victorian Electoral Commissioner from 1999 to 2004. Steve Tully, Victorian Electoral Commissioner from 2005 to 2012, was previously South Australian Electoral Commissioner from 1996 to 2004. Warwick Gately, Victorian Electoral Commissioner from 2012, was formerly the Western Australian Electoral Commissioner.

Further, 107 potential respondents were members – or previous members within the period of the study from 2002 to 2014 – of the Commonwealth JSCEM, the NSW JSCEM or the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee. Some clarification around committee membership is needed. The total NSW and Victorian pool was considerably smaller than the Commonwealth JSCEM; NSW has had a total of 30 members of the NSW JSCEM since 2004, Victoria 21 members. It is important to note these numbers are not entirely representative of the three committees’ memberships. Committee memberships are liable to change due to a variety of factors, including internal parliamentary considerations, resignations or promotions. These effects are not reflected in the target; although they alter the target size by no more than 10 percent of total membership, plus or minus. Compared to its state-level counterparts, the Commonwealth JSCEM also maintains a somewhat revolving roster. During the committee’s 2014/2015 inquiry into the 2013 federal election, 14 members were listed in the committee membership, with a further 42 Senators “participating in the inquiry” (Commonwealth JSCEM 2015, p.xii). So the number of Commonwealth JSCEM members since 2002 who may have participated in a committee inquiry could exceed 100.
Final sample

Prior to recruiting the sample, a pilot or ‘test’ interview was conducted in June 2013 with Bernie Finn MLC, the then Chair of the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee. While pilot interviews are not required in qualitative research the interview served to test interview techniques, the semi-structured interview method and the validity of several lines of inquiry with Mr Finn. It was also hypothesised that Mr Finn, and other parliamentarians, would have strong views about potential shifts in voting behaviour, attuned by on-the-ground insights gained during their employment as parliamentarians and campaigning. Data from Mr Finn’s responses ultimately supported this hypothesis and encouraged the pursuit of the interview program. Mr Finn was provided with copies of the consent instruments which were later provided to all respondents, and a question / issues sheet prior to the interview which ultimately differed to the final question guide given to respondents. Based on Mr Finn’s feedback the question guide was refined to five or seven ‘discussion points’. The points reflect Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman’s (1975) techniques.

Table 4.4 lists the 20 respondents. The final sample is smaller than the target population.29 During the interview process it was determined that some respondents, who were not initially selected due to reasons of geography, could contribute to the study, given their knowledge of the early voting at federal, NSW and Victorian elections and association with the two sample groups in other Australian jurisdictions, whether as electoral officials or members of Parliament who sat on a parliamentary electoral matters committee. ‘Natural’ sampling occurs regularly in semi-structured interview environments (Creswell 2003, p.4). These interviewees were: Kaye Mousely, former South Australian Electoral Commissioner; Julian Type and Andrew Hawkey, Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner and Deputy Electoral Commissioner respectively; and Mark Parnell, Greens Member in the South Australian Legislative Council.

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29 Based on analysis of the potential target population, I developed an initial database of 66 potential respondents. The initial list was developed after excluding potential respondents from the original 119 on several grounds, including obvious factors such as whether they held a ministerial portfolio (due to the increased difficulty of securing an interview), their parliamentary status (active or retired). Respondents were also screened by location, jurisdiction and the corresponding geographic and time limits of the study. The ‘initial’ 50 were contacted by letter and telephone. The letter was addressed to the respondent directly and written on Swinburne University letterhead, including copies of the discussion points and human ethics instrument. Of the 50 contacts and several repeat contacts due to missed connections, 30 expressed interest in participating in the study. The ‘second’ 30 were then resent the letter and further contact was made, establishing times and dates for the interview. Of the 30, a final 25 committed to the interview process, with 21 interviews being completed. The final four did not eventuate due to scheduling issues and one Member’s retirement from the Parliament of Australia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 25 July 2013      | Adem Somyurek MLC, Member for South Easter Metropolitan Region, Victorian Legislative Council, Australian Labor Party  
Chair of Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee (2006-2009) |
| 31 October 2013   | Alex Somlyay, former Deputy Chair of the Commonwealth JSCEM (2010-2013), (in person) Australian Liberal Party |
| 1 December 2013   | Bill Shepherd, former NT Electoral Commissioner (in person) |
| 17 January 2014   | Senator Scott Ryan, former Member of the Commonwealth JSCEM (2007 to 2010), (in person) Australian Liberal Party |
| 27 May 2014       | Senator Lee Rhiannon, Parliament of Australia, Senate, former Member of the Commonwealth JSCEM (2010-2013) and former Member of NSW Legislative Council (1999-2010) (telephone), Australian Greens |
| 27 May 2014       | Bernie Finn MLC, former Chair of Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee (2010 to 2014), (in person) Australian Liberal Party |
| 27 May 2014       | David Feeney MP, former Member of the Commonwealth JSCEM (2010-2013), (in person) Australian Labor Party |
| 27 May 2014       | Linda Franklin, Director, NSW Electoral Commission, (telephone) |
| 29 May 2014       | Lee Tarlarmis MLC, former Member of the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee (2010 to 2014), (in person) Australian Labor Party |
| 7 June 2014       | Daryl Melham, former Chair of Commonwealh JSCEM (2010 to 2013), (telephone) Australian Labor Party |
| 11 June 2014      | Peter Phelps MLC, member of NSW JSCEM (2011 - ) (telephone), Australian Labor Party |
| 12 June 2014      | Phil Green, ACT Electoral Commissioner (telephone) |
| 27 June 2014      | Candy Broad MP, former Member of Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee (2006-2010) (telephone), Australian Labor Party |
| 11 July 2014      | Mark Parnell MLC, Australian Greens, Parliament of South Australia, Legislative Council (telephone) |
| 12 August 2014    | Julian Type (former Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner and Andrew Hawkey (Deputy Electoral Commissioner (telephone) |
| 28 August 2014    | Warwick Gately AM, Victorian Electoral Commissioner (2014 - ) and former Western Australian Electoral Commissioner (in person)  
Liz Williams, Deputy Electoral Commissioner (2004 - ) (in person) |
| 5 September 2014  | Kaye Mousley, former South Australian Electoral Commissioner (telephone) |
**Data collection**

Interviews generated 207 pages of raw data. All interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist within four weeks of the interview. The project received human ethics research approval from Swinburne University on 1 March 2013. Appendix One and Two are copies of the consent and approval instruments.

Eleven interviews were conducted in person, nine by telephone. Prior to each interview all respondents were informed of the context of the interviews, offered the right to participate to the extent that they wished, that they were not under any obligations to answer all questions and could withdraw from the study at any point during the interview or subsequently. All respondents received a further copy of the human research instrument and protocol. All respondents were offered anonymity, with one respondent taking up the offer. All respondents consented to receiving follow up correspondence regarding the thesis.

Developing a rapport with respondents is a crucial component of the semi-structured elite interview in political sciences (Leech 2002; Aberbach and Rockman 2002; Kelly 2008). According to Leech (2002, p.665), “without rapport, even the best-phrased questions can fall flat and elicit brief, uninformative answers. Rapport means more than just putting people at ease. It means convincing people that you are listening, that you understand and are interested in what they are talking about, and that they should continue talking”. There are several ways of doing this within the interview. The thesis aimed to develop a rapport with all respondents, following Aberbach, Chesney and Rockman’s (1975) advice in three areas: putting [respondents] at ease, asking listening type questions and sharing personal anecdotes where appropriate. Sharing personal anecdotes of the political and parliamentary process was possible due to my employment with the Parliament of Victoria’s Electoral Matters Committee, and membership of the VEC’s Senior Electoral Official pool for Victorian elections.

Reflexive personal notes were kept for all interviews and typed up within one week of each interview. All interviews were also recorded using a personal voice recorder, with audio recordings retained.

**Qualitative chapter procedure**

Chapter Five, Seven and Nine begin by discussing the legislative and technical reforms under consideration, identifying how it has affected early voting administration. The reforms are
then situated in the definitional table as per the assessment framework. Each reform is then assessed separately against each of the six barriers in the assessment framework. Each reform is then visualised and summarised.

**Phase Two: Quantitative analysis**

The second component of the mixed methods research design uses quantitative data to address the thesis’ second research question: *to what extent have Australia’s early voting reforms impacted voter turnout at federal, NSW and Victorian elections from 2002 to 2015?* Specifically, as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Three, the thesis investigates if there is a District-level association between early voting and the socio-economic variables in the Resources model. To do this, the thesis pursues multivariate OLS regression analysis of socio-demographic information at the Divisional and District level at 10 individual elections (three federal, three NSW and four Victorian), using aggregate-level Divisional and District voting data and ABS Census of Population and Housing data.

Chapter Ten also uses electoral roll data from the 2010 Victorian state election to augment the multivariate findings, employing a multinominal regression technique and other descriptive statistics tests. As these procedures are unique to that chapter, they are described in Chapter Ten.

**Population and variables**

Referring to table 4.5, the dependent variable for the OLS regressions in this this is the raw number of early votes in the relevant federal electoral Division or state electoral District. All data corresponds to the Lower House electoral districts – House of Representaties Divisions for federal elections in Chapter Six, and Legislative Assembly elections in NSW and Victoria in Chapters Eight and Ten respectively. All data are from general elections – for federal elections, the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections; for NSW state elections, the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections; and for Victorian state elections, the 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections. In total, 328 individual Lower House Division or District elections are studied.

Data for the dependent variable was sourced from the AEC’s, the NSW Electoral Commission’s or the VEC’s archives. In Australia, electoral commission data provides an authoritative record of election results. Prior to the 1990s voting data was only distributed to the media, political parties and those interested in election data (VEC 2011, p.iii). The
internet has revolutionised the way electoral commissions report election results. All nine of Australia’s electoral commissions now maintain an official Virtual Tally Room (VTR) at election time. The VTR is the virtual approximation of the traditional Election Night tally room that many jurisdictions, until recently, established on Election Night to provide the media with a place to report results. The VTR was first established at the 1996 federal election.

Chapter Eight substitutes the dependent variable with the raw number of iVotes in a NSW District.

There are 12 independent variables in this which are common to the four models of voter turnout for federal, NSW and Victorian state elections. In addition, Chapter Six introduces three additional variables for the Political model based on AEC data about Divisional classifications for marginality, historical election results and ballot paper positioning. Chapter Ten also adds three additional variables for the Electoral / Institutional model corresponding to data from the VEC’s informal voting surveys. Chapter Six excludes the variable for the number of voting centres at federal elections due to a lack of verified data. The rationale for including these variables is explained at each relevant point. Chapters Six, Eight and Ten also feature a table of variables for the multivariate analysis, as per table 4.5.

The independent variables are directly associated with the four models of voter turnout theorised in Chapter Three. As noted earlier, four relationships will be tested; that between early voting (the dependent variable) and the Resources model, the Social-Cultural model, the Political model and Electoral / Institutional model of voter turnout. The rationale for selecting each variable, and how it corresponds to voter turnout theory and early voting, was explained in Chapter Three. The following discussion focuses on the ‘mechanics’, including data sources and variable treatment.

Data for the independent variables was drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics Community Profiles – Basic Community Profiles, corresponding to the 2001, 2006 and 2011 Census of House and Populations. Community Profiles “provide a comprehensive statistical picture of an area in TAB delimited format, providing characteristics relating to people, families and dwellings. They cover most topics on the Census form” (ABS 2016). Community Profiles are available for a range of geographic structures, including the Commonwealth Electoral District (CED) and State Electoral District (SED). It is worth clarifying that the Community Profiles drill down to statistically smaller geographies; i.e.,
place of enumeration / household level. While these profiles may have yielded additional insights, it was beyond the scope of this thesis to explore data profiles at the household level.\(^{30}\)

| Table 4.5: Example variables, voter turnout models, Chapters Six, Eight and Ten |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| **Dependent variable**     | **Variable measurement** | **Discussion** |
| Early voting in person     | Raw number of early votes in person, as sourced from relevant electoral commission’s results page. | N/A |
|                            | Raw number of iVotes, from NSW Electoral Commission’s results page. | N/A |
| iVote                      |                                  |                        |

| **Independent variable** | **Variable measurement** | **Discussion** |
| a) Resources model       | Number of adult male and females employed in the Division or District at the SED/CED level, based on relevant Census. | Based on ABS data, Community Profiles (SED/CED). |
| 1. Employment            | Number of people who hold tertiary qualifications in the Division or District at the SED/CED level. | Based on ABS data, Community Profiles (SED/CED). |
| b) Social-Cultural model | Number of people born overseas in the District at the SED level, based on relevant Census. | Based on ABS data, Community Profiles (SED/CED). |
| 3. Born overseas         | Number of people who changed address one-year prior to the relevant Census in the Division or District at the SED/CED level. | Based on ABS data, Community Profiles (SED/CED). |
| 4. Level of one-year population stability | Number of people per square kilometre in the Division or District based on the relevant Census and SED/CED data. | Based on ABS data, Community Profiles (SED/CED). |
| c) Political model       | Two-candidate preferred count is a distribution of preferences to the two candidates who are expected to come first and second in the election. Usually, but not always, these will be the candidates representing the ALP and the Liberal or National Parties. Closeness is raw number of votes. | This service is provided by Australian electoral commissions as a courtesy to parties and candidates. It is usually given to media outlets for reports on results on Election Night. |
| 6. Closeness between two-candidate (2CP) preferred candidates | The raw vote difference between the first candidate and third candidate in the 2CP count. | N/A |
| 7. Closeness between first and third candidate | The raw vote difference between the two candidates in the 2CP counts conducted at early voting centres. | N/A |
| 8. Closeness between 2CP count, early voting centre counts. | The number of candidates standing for election in electoral Division or District | N/A |
| 9. Number of candidates standing for election in electoral Division or District | Total number of enrolled people in each Division or District. Data sourced from the relevant electoral Commission’s results page. | N/A |
| 11. Turnout               | The total number of eligible electors who voted divided by the total number of eligible electors in Division or District. | N/A |
| 12. Informal             | Informal votes are those which are not completed according to the parameters set out in electoral legislation. | N/A |

\(^{30}\) Time series data is also available at the Community Profile level from each of the 2001, 2006 and 2011 Census. Nevertheless, time-series data was inappropriate as it does not account for electoral redistributions, which occurred in NSW in 2013 and Victoria in 2002 and 2013. Federal electoral redistributions happen by state and are more frequent.
Ten of the twelve common variables are discrete, continuous numerical variables, based on the number of people corresponding to that category in the CED or SED. Observations can take a value based on a count from a set of distinct whole values but cannot take the value of a fraction between one value and the next closest value. A person cannot be a half person, or a vote half a vote. Variables 11 and 12 are numerical variables expressed as a percentage of their value in the Division or District, i.e., turnout of 92.5 percent.

As noted by Grace-Martin (2016), a “common practice is to categorise continuous predictor variables so they work in an ANOVA. This is often done with median splits—splitting the sample into two categories—the ‘high’ values above the median and the ‘low’ values below the median”. However, the thesis does not recode the independent variables. The reasons for this primarily relate to the implied factors of the analysis. The thesis does not attempt to develop a predictive model for early voting. Instead it is interested in how the independent variables explain the variation in the dependent variable. Due to this, beyond the median split strategy, how could we determine appropriate categories for the independent variables? For instance, it seems arbitrary to code the Born Overseas variable as ‘low’, ‘medium’ and ‘high’.

The methodological literature also debates recoding numeric variables into categorical variables. As noted by Grace-Martin (2016), it is ultimately a decision for the researcher: “the main thing to understand is that the general linear model doesn’t really care if your predictor is continuous or categorical. But you, as the analyst, choose the information you want from the analysis based on the coding of the predictor”. There is also the issue of bias and data cleaning. As most economists and political scientists know, data can be sliced and interpreted in many ways and manipulated to deliver a set of desired research outcomes. Boomsma (1987, p.186) discussed the common practice of regrouping discrete variables into few observations as a strategy that gives that impression to prevent skewed distributions in the data. However, whether a scholar should use these techniques is questioned in the literature. As Boomsma discussed (1987, p.186), “the researcher might be tempted to transform discrete or continuous variables to approximate symmetric distributions…which would thus give statistical estimates that were ‘closer to theory’ than those obtained a situation where no transformations were employed”. In other words, is it acceptable to transform the data realising that it might not deliver intended results, or at the least, results different from those obtained from raw variables? Accordingly, the thesis does not recode variables as a research strategy to allow the raw data to speak for itself.
Why ordinary least squares regression?

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is a widely used technique in political science to estimate political and voting behaviour, given “aggregate information at the level of precincts or election districts” (Gelman et al 2001, p.111). OLS regression is a generalised linear modelling technique that may be used to model a single response variable which has been recorded on at least an interval scale. The “technique may be applied to single or multiple explanatory variables and also categorical explanatory variables that have been appropriately coded” (Hutcheson 2011, p.224). The basic idea behind OLS is that we are trying to model the relationship “between a continuous response variable (Y) and a continuous explanatory variable (X) may be represented using a line of best-fit, where Y is predicted, to some extent, by X”.

There are several reasons why the thesis uses OLS regression as the main modelling technique. The first reason is the long-term validity of aggregate-level data for electoral studies. Some scholars have suggested that it is appropriate to measure public policy outcomes using (District-level) correlations – and in some cases methodologically preferable – when a researcher is attempting to estimate District-level effects (Lubinski and Humphreys 1996). Kramer (1983) supported the public policy application of OLS regression, arguing that survey data “cannot always detect any comparable relationship as may be found in aggregate data”. Further, OLS regression offers insights into the thesis’ second research question due to the lack of survey data in Australia about early voting. Major survey instruments, such as the AES and the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, have also not addressed early voting.

In addition, OLS regression underpinned many of the first analyses of US early voting behaviour as part of the burgeoning literature on convenience voting. Given we know so little about the impact of early voting on voter turnout at Australian elections, echoing early US-based studies using aggregate-level data is a sensible strategy. Indeed, many early studies of US early voting and absentee voting employed aggregate-level data sets at the precinct or state level. Goldstein (1995) focused on partisanship, developing a theory of early voting (amongst other turnout predictors) based on a multi-level model employing aggregate data. Neely and Richardson (2001, p.173) also produced one of the first US County-level studies of early voting reform, focusing on the introduction of early voting in person in Tennessee County in 1994. Using county level-census data and voting returns from a 1996 election in Tennessee, they examined early voting participation by different socioeconomic groups.
Similarly, Stein and Garcia-Monet (1997) examined the correlation between early voting, voter turnout and electoral support for candidates, employing data on balloting in Texas for the 1992 US presidential election. In addition, there is a considerable literature examining US vote-by-mail initiates at the aggregate level, including Traugott and Mason (1995).

In concluding, there is also the issue of consistency. While individual-level data from the 2010 Victorian state election is available, this data is the only data of its type. Having access to both aggregate and individual role data does present opportunities for multi-level modelling, but the results would only apply to one jurisdiction in this thesis (Victoria).

*Quantitative procedure*

Descriptive statistics are presented first. These are followed by the OLS regressions. All tests were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 22. Variables from each model were assigned to a ‘block’ within the interface and entered simultaneously (i.e. the ENTER mode). This is an appropriate analysis when dealing with a small set of predictors and when the researcher does not know which independent variables will create the best prediction equation. Each predictor is assessed as though it were entered after all the other independent variables were entered, and assessed by what it offers to the prediction of the dependent variable that is different from the predictions offered by the other variables entered into the model. In block mode, this allows us to assess particular groups of variables corresponding to a theoretical framework; in this case, the four voter turnout models. By doing this, each model acts as a control – so Model One is controlled by Model Two, and so forth.

In the multivariate analysis outputs the level of statistical significance is often expressed as the so-called $p$ value. Statistical significance is reported at the following levels: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Coefficients are reported as standardised coefficients. Where appropriate additional commentary is offered about unstandardised coefficients. Unstandardised relationships show that for a one-raw-unit increment on a predictor, the dependent variable increases (or if $B$ is negative, decreases) by its raw units corresponding to what the $B$ coefficient is. For instance, the unstandardised ($B$) coefficient for Born Overseas could be .200. This would tell us that, for each *increment of one raw unit* of Born Overseas, projected early voting in person would increase by 200 *raw units* of Born Overseas. Regarding normality assumptions in the data, the data is not cleaned, as discussed above.
A final point about multicollinearity is warranted. The econometric and political science literature reports different thresholds for variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerance in multiple regression analyses. A VIF is basically a quantifier of the degree of multicollinearity in a regression equation. For instance, “if the VIF of an independent variable was 5.27 this tells us that the standard error of the coefficient of the predictor error is 2.3 times as large as it would if the variable were uncorrelated with the other predictor variables. Some scholars report a VIF of four as too unacceptable, others 10 (O’Brien 2007, p.674). Collinearity can cause a variety of problems for aggregated analysis. As noted by O’Brien (2007, p.673);

Collinearity can increase estimates of parameter variance; yield models in which no variable is statistically significant even though R$^2$ is large; produce parameter estimates of the “incorrect sign” and of implausible magnitude; create situations in which small changes in the data produce wide swings in parameter estimates; and, in truly extreme cases, prevent the numerical solution of a model…These problems can be severe and sometimes crippling.

While VIF factors are not reported alongside the regression models in Chapters Six, Eight and Ten – this is not standard practice in political science – it is important to note that the VIF for any independent variable in the 10 regression models (and the 2015 NSW state election iVote model in Chapter Six) did not exceed five. Accordingly, we can be confident that multicollinearity is not present in the OLS regressions. This is important given that the two variables in the Resources model are the number of people in full-time employment, and the number of people with tertiary qualifications. ‘Eyeballing’ these figures might suggest collinearity, but there is none.

**Quantitative chapter procedure**

Chapters Six, Eight and Ten begin examining descriptive statistics of the dependent variable, including discussion about the growth of early voting in each jurisdiction. Then, OLS regressions and model effects are reported sequentially; for instance, when discussing the regressions for the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections the Resources model is addressed first, with the model effects reported for the three elections. The discussion then moves to Social-Cultural model and so forth.
**Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the thesis’ mixed-methods research design, explaining the qualitative and quantitative phases. For the qualitative analysis, it develops an assessment framework for Australia’s early voting reforms, with the documentary data sources augmented by semi-structured elite interviews. For the quantitative analysis, it documents the multivariate regression technique. By design, the chapter also provides evidence of the utility of mixed-methods research for election studies, given the disparity between the two research questions.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, assesses two early voting reforms for federal elections using the assessment framework; the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010* (Cwth) and the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013* (Cwth).
Chapter Five; Early voting at federal elections, 2007-2013

Having established the thesis’ methodology in Chapter Four, this chapter uses the assessment framework to investigate two reforms to the administration of early voting at federal elections passed during the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments from 2010 to 2013. The reforms are the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010* (Cwth) and the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013* (Cwth). The chapter finds that both reforms were not influenced by partisanship, and that the Commonwealth JSCEM helped legitimate the AEC’s calls to streamline the administration of early voting at federal elections. The chapter also examines how the AEC’s independence was challenged by the Commonwealth JSCEM during Bill debates in 2013.

After briefly describing the main provisions of the legislation and their effect on early voting, the chapter assesses the two reforms against each of the six barriers in the assessment framework. The chapter ends with conclusions about the assessment framework and the drivers of these particular early voting reforms.

**What reforms?**

*Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010* (Cwth)

This Bill was passed in June 2010 and formed part of the then Rudd Labor government’s electoral reform agenda, following the Howard government’s suite of significant changes to Commonwealth electoral legislation in 2006. The main purpose of the Bill was to amend the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cwth) and the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* (Cwth) to include provisions for several ‘big ticket’ items in Rudd’s electoral reform agenda, including:

- “Allowing electors to electronically update their enrolment details;
- Enabling the AEC to process enrolment transactions outside the electoral Division for which a person was enrolling;
- Enabling electronic voting for vision-impaired electors;
- Restricting the number of nominations in a Division from a single political party; and
- Enabling pre-poll votes cast in an elector’s Home Division to be cast and counted as ordinary votes, wherever practicable” (Explanatory Memorandum, June 2010, p.2).
While this last measure was arguably subjugated, as we shall see, by political wrangling over Labor’s attempts to wind back the Howard government’s close of roll provisions, there was still considerable discussion in the House about the growing trend towards early voting at federal elections and the need to provide the AEC with a mechanism to treat early votes as ordinary votes\textsuperscript{31} for the purposes of vote counting, in order to avoid potentially delaying an election result. Under the measures introduced by the Bill early voting can now take place in an early voting centre or Divisional Returning Officer’s office within an elector’s Division within separate voting compartments (Explanatory Memorandum, June 2010, p.3). The Bill also authorised the AEC to determine the availability of early voting centres, and provided additional rules for the handling and transportation of early voting ballot papers from early voting centres to count centres (Explanatory Memorandum, June 2010, p.3). As noted by the Bill’s explanatory memorandum, these measures were designed to accommodate for changing assumptions “about the long-held [view] that electors will vote at their local polling booth on Election Day” (June 2010, p.3).

In summary, these changes were the first legislative amendments to early voting arrangements since the AEC’s introduction of oral declaration voting services for postal electors at Divisional Returning Officer’s offices in 1993.

\textit{Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013 (Cwth)}

Like the 2010 Bill above the \textit{Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Bill 2012 (Cwth)} amended the \textit{Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cwth)} and the \textit{Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984 (Cwth)}. The Bill also implemented the Government response to Recommendations 3, 9, 10, 11, 15, 29 and 30 of the Commonwealth JSCEM report on the 2010 federal election.

The Bill’s headline provisions related to ballot box security and further technical amendments to AEC procedures should a ballot box be opened prematurely. However, the Bill also enacted several minor amendments to early voting procedures which, in hindsight, can be seen as an additional response by the Labor government to the growth of early voting. Specifically, it removed the requirement under the \textit{Electoral Act and Referendum Act} (Cwth) for an applicant for a pre-poll ordinary vote to complete and sign a certificate in lieu of a

\textsuperscript{31} An ordinary vote is a vote that is cast on Election Day and counted on Election Night.
declaration. It also provided that early voting cannot commence earlier than three days after the date fixed for declaration of nominations for any type of election or by-election – as discussed in Chapter Three, the VEC and the AEC’s Election Managers are often forced to provide hand-drawn or photocopied ballots to electors who vote on the first day of early voting, given that the ballot papers have yet to be printed due to closeness of the close of nominations period and the commencement of early voting (Parliament of Victoria 2015).

**Definitions**

Referring to table 5.1, the 2010 and 2013 amendments fall within the minor and technical category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1: Early voting reforms, federal, 2010-2013</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010 (Cwth)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description of reform</td>
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<td>Proportionality</td>
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<p>| <strong>Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013 (Cwth)</strong> |</p>
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<th>Description of reform</th>
<th>Major reform</th>
<th>Minor reform</th>
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<td>Proportionality</td>
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<td>Election levels</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>Early voting to commence three days after close of nomination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>Heightened ballot box security measures</td>
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<td>Ballot structure</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Removing requirement for early voting declaration of certificate</td>
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<td>Electoral procedures</td>
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Applying the assessment framework

1. \textit{Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010} (Cwth)

\textit{Barrier One – procedural superiority of the status quo}

The 2010 Bill was part of the then Rudd government’s broader electoral reform agenda. In December 2008 the Government issued a green paper examining electoral finance reform issues – the first of its kind by an Australian government – and in September 2009, a second paper examining the reform of electoral administration. This second green paper considered a range of ideas aimed at improving Australia’s electoral processes, including “current arrangements for elections in Australia, the definition of who is entitled to vote in Australian elections, maintenance of the electoral roll and close of roll provisions and processes for the counting of votes and determination of election results” (Australian government 2009, p.2).

Brent (2016) argued the green paper remains the most comprehensive examination of Australia’s electoral legislation and administration since the Hawke government’s introduction of the Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Reform in 1983.

The second green paper specifically noted growing demand for early voting. Besides statistics about the growth of early voting at federal elections – it noted the number of pre-poll votes cast has almost tripled, whilst the number of postal votes cast more than doubled (Australian government 2009, p.165) – the paper also discussed the theoretical and normative implications of increased early voting, a first for an Australian government document. It asked those who wished to respond to the review process to consider whether “the underlying architecture of Australian elections assumes that most Australians will be voting in person at their local polling place on polling day, and that any other form of voting will be an exception”, and whether this was a becoming “a less realistic assumption with every election” (Australian government 2009, p.166). It also raised interesting questions around the availability of early voting practices, and whether convenience voting had led to inappropriate expectations amongst electors about unfettered access to early voting services, presenting arguments for and against the trend. On the negative side, it explored options to compel the AEC to enforce early voting criteria, including “activity…to catch persons using early voting for convenience reasons only, rather than for one of the specified grounds” (Australian government 2009, p.165). On the positive side – and noting the JSCEM’s support for early voting on the 2007 federal election – the report noted that “early voting offers
benefits to voters, by making voting more accessible for electors who might otherwise have difficulty casting their vote on polling day (Australian government 2009, p.165). It noted:

Any attempt to reduce the accessibility of these options might make voting more difficult for certain eligible electors, and thereby discourage them from exercising their right to vote…administrators should accept that early voting will continue to rise and instead focus on ensuring that it is administered as efficiently and effectively as possible (Australian government 2009, p.165).

While this statement shows that the Rudd government accepted early voting, the Coalition Opposition and minor parties also supported changes to counting arrangements for early votes. During debate about the first iteration of the Bill, then known as the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Close of Rolls and Other Measures Bill) Bill 2010* (Cwth), the then Coalition Opposition opposed measures relating to the close of roll provisions consistent with the former Howard government’s proposals and measures related to identity requirements. However, the Opposition did not oppose the early voting amendments, adhering to its position in a minority report tabled with the JSCEM’s report on the 2007 federal election. Amongst the minor political parties, the Australian Greens did not oppose the early voting amendments, and Independent Senator Nick Xenophon ostensibly had no issue with the amendment given his interest in provisional voting in an unrelated Bill (Explanatory Memorandum 2010, p.5).

These positions were reflected in the interview evidence. For instance, Senator Scott Ryan noted that the 2010 Bill “saw support” for the early voting amendments because in his view there was cross-party concern about the potential for early voting to impact on a timely election result (Ryan 2014, p.p.7-9). Former JSCEM Deputy Chair Alex Somulyay also supported this point of view, as did former JSCEM Chair Daryl Melham. Melham specifically recalled conversations with his former JSCEM colleagues about the 2010 Bill; while the JSCEM did not consider the Bill at the time as it was considered in the committee phase by the Senate’s Finance and Public Administration Committee, Melham recalled several discussions about the early voting amendments and a “general agreement” about the need to ensure timely election results (Melham 2014, p.p.4-5). Beyond these supportive positions, the only contrasting views from interviewees came from Senator Lee Rhiannon; she noted that the Greens had some reservations about legitimating early voting as it might
disadvantage them politically given issues minor parties face getting staff to work at early voting centres (Rhiannon 2014, p.6).

This barrier therefore demonstrated that the status quo of not counting early votes on Election Night was surmounted due to the influence the then Rudd government’s electoral reform agenda, government acceptance of flexible voting and bipartisan support for timely election results.

*Barrier Two – political tradition*

Despite political wrangling and Kelly’s (2008) argument that electoral reform is tightly controlled by the parliamentary sphere in Australia, minor electoral reform at the federal level has largely proceeded on bipartisan grounds since the 1970s (Farrell and McAllister 2006, p.44). This is largely due to the influence of the JSCER’s first report in 1983; the report remains one of the first, largely bipartisan attempts by the Parliament to investigate substantial reforms to Australia’s electoral administration (Farrell and McAllister 2006, p.45).

However, the Howard government’s electoral reforms in the mid-2000s challenged this tradition. In 2006 the Howard government introduced a suite of reforms to electoral procedures with the passage of the *Electoral and Referendum (Electoral Integrity and Other Measures) Act 2006* (Cwth), with the reforms representing the culmination of Howard’s electoral reform agenda since his first election in 1996 (Kelly 2006, p.2). It was largely able to do this following the 2004 federal election when the Coalition won control of the Senate. Some of the changes included the introduction of evidence of identity for enrolments and provisional voting, changing the date for the close of rolls from the seventh day after the issue of the writs to the third day for certain categories of enrolment (updating details, for those turning 18 years of age between the writs and Election Day, and for those gaining citizenship) and increasing financial disclosure thresholds from $1,500 to $10,000 (Electoral Referendum Second Reading Speech, 2006, p.p.2-4). These changes were highly controversial; Kelly noted “the ‘reforms’ made it more difficult for citizens to vote, while making it easier for donations to be made to political parties in secret” (Kelly 2006, p.1).
While some of these amendments were overturned in High Court challenges\(^{32}\), they ultimately fostered significant animosity between the Coalition and Labor, with the conflict most pronounced during the first Rudd government (2007-2010). In particular, Rudd’s three Bills were marketed as part of Labor’s “ongoing efforts to restore integrity and fairness to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cwth)”, especially the integrity of the electoral roll (Gary Gray 2010, p.1). Most interviewees connected to federal politics supported this view. Although Senator Scott Ryan argued the Coalition’s electoral reform agenda was ultimately concerned with ensuring the electoral roll was accurate and not marked by incorrect or fraudulent electoral enrolment – Ryan has been one of the Coalition’s more frequent spokesmen on electoral reform in the past decade – he agreed that the first Rudd government was a time of deep political division over electoral reform (Ryan 2014, p.p.1-2). Similarly, Daryl Melham noted the conflict between Howard and Rudd’s agenda during his time as Chair of the Commonwealth JSCEM (Melham 2014, p.2), although like Ryan he also argued that Labor’s attempts at the time to restore the close of roll period to seven days rather than three were aimed at making it easier, not harder, for people to vote (Melham 2014, p.2).

Nevertheless, there is little evidence to suggest that this politicking influenced the 2010 early voting reforms; this is particularly evident when reviewing second reading speeches on the 2010 Bill. Of the 22 second reading speeches in the House of Representatives, only two mentioned the reforms to treat early votes as ordinary votes for the purposes of vote counting. One of these speeches was by a government MP which essentially listed the clauses in the Bill without contextual discussion (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2010, p.3533); the other was then Member for Goldstein Andrew Robb’s contribution in which he noted that the Coalition Opposition would support the 2010 Bill (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2010, p.5347). In contrast, all 22 referred to the close of roll provisions. Senator Michael Ronaldson’s second reading speech captures the nature of the debate well. He noted that while most of the measures in the 2010 Bill were inherently uncontroversial, including the two amendments to early voting administration, he observed that Labor’s three electoral reform Bills, which were procedurally treated as a single Bill, breached “convention in relation to these electoral bills…Historically, they have always gone in by way of two packages—one controversial and one noncontroversial. The government chose to bring them in together—so one bill with controversial and one with non-controversial measures”

\(^{32}\) For instance, in *Rowe vs Electoral Commissioner* [2010] HCA 46, the Court declared the 2006 amendments to be invalid. As a consequence, a week prior to the election the AEC announced that an extra 57,732 voters had been enrolled and that a further 40,408 voters had their enrolment details updated.
Moreover, Ronaldson’s speech, along with the fact that ten of the 22 second reading speeches on the 2010 Bill referred to reforms to provisional voting rather than early voting, suggest a degree of consensus around the 2010 early voting reforms.

Accordingly, it is difficult to see how political tradition influenced the 2010 Bill in relation to early voting.

**Barrier Three – systemic balance and efficiency**

As noted in barrier one there was a high level of awareness around the potential, prior to 2010, for a high number of early votes to potentially delay a federal election result. Of the 22 second reading speeches on the 2010 Bill, while only two discussed the early voting provision, then Senator Mark Arbib’s speech revealed that treating early votes as ordinary votes would have seen an extra 687,000 votes counted on Election Night at the 2007 federal election (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2010, p.3533). Concern about delayed election results due to early voting was a common concern amongst interviewees. All interviewees discussed this, including electoral commissioners and members of state Parliaments. It is thus fair to say that the systemic inefficiency of not counting early votes was surmounted by the 2010 Bill.

However, evidence from the 2016 federal election suggests this barrier has still not been surmounted. Some election results were delayed at the 2016 federal election due to a high number of early votes (ABC 2016). Appearing before the Commonwealth JSCEM during its inquiry into the 2016 federal election, Australian Electoral Commissioner Tom Rogers discussed how the AEC probably miscalculated its estimates of the number of early votes at the 2016 federal election, leading to queues at early voting centres and allegations that some early voting centres ran out of ballot papers (ABC 2016). In its submission to the JSCEM the AEC noted:

…Early vote estimation methodology was developed and implemented to predict changes in early (pre-poll) voting from the 2013 to the 2016 federal election. The AEC also developed and implemented a polling place assessment strategy. Under this strategy, existing polling places were reviewed against a minimum vote threshold based on the demographic classification of the population density in the area serviced by the polling place. A range of other factors were also taken into consideration and
relevant Parliamentary representatives were provided with the opportunity to provide comments for consideration as part of the process (AEC 2016, p.69).

These miscalculations can also be attributed to the AEC’s response to substantial legislative change three months prior to the 2016 federal election including a new voting system for the Senate (AEC 2016, p.5). With less than three months between the passage of the Senate voting reforms and the election, it is possible the AEC was organisationally stretched.

**Barrier Four – actors’ vested interests**

As seen in barriers two and three, the 2010 Bill was one of three pieces of electoral legislation proposed by the Rudd government in response to the Howard government’s 2006 electoral reforms. Debate was heavily focused on the close of roll provisions, with all 22 second reading speeches for the Bill mentioning the close of roll provisions, and 10 mentioning changes to allow provisional voters to enrol on Election Day. Due to this, and the consensus documented in barriers two and three around the need for timely election results, neither the Coalition or Labor appeared to have an ‘agenda’ for early voting in the 2010 Bill. As we will see in Chapters Seven and Nine, there was a distinct lack of partisan interest in early voting reforms in the 2000’s in all three jurisdictions in this thesis.

**Barrier Five – parliamentary oversight of electoral administration**

The Commonwealth JSCEM has had a longstanding interest in early voting. Its position has evolved since the early 1990s from not supporting the growth of convenience voting (or declaration voting as it was then known), to partial acceptance then acceptance. These policy shifts help contextualise the uncontroversial nature of the early voting provisions in the 2010 Bill.

The JSCEM received evidence and deliberated over early voting as part of its inquiries into the 1996, 1998, 2001 and 2007 federal elections; 2004 featured some evidence about early voting but was largely focused on direct enrolment as a prelude to Howard’s 2006 electoral reforms. Over time, through these inquiries, we can see how the JSCEM’s position on early voting evolved via its views about the need to treat early votes as ordinary votes for vote counting. Initially, the JSCEM did not support declaration voting. In 1996 the JSCEM decided that voting should be done on Election Day (JSCEM 1996, p.54); these arguments were heavily influenced at the time by Coalition MPs, who argued that Election Day was an important civic ritual requiring protection (JSCEM 1996, p.54) and that the previous JSCEM
in 1993 had not encouraged the trend (JSCEM 1996, p.54). Further, the JSCEM maintained its stance against non-Election Day voting in its report on the 1998 federal election, stating that the committee had a general position to not encourage declaration (early) voting. In 2001 the JSCEM also made a similar – if less convincing – finding against early voting and counting early votes on Election Day, when it said it had received “insufficient evidence” to support an administrative shift to pre-Election Day voting (JSCEM 2001, p.p.159-160). In these three reports, it is worth noting that there were no dissenting recommendations in minority reports against the committee’s findings about early voting – we can assume that the then Labor Opposition members also wanted to keep early voting in check.

However, following the 2007 federal election and the Rudd Labor government’s election, the JSCEM’s views had shifted. The committee’s report on the 2007 federal election featured an entire chapter on early voting, entitled “Responding to increased demand for early voting” (JSCEM 2007, p.173). Approximately 25 percent of submissions to the inquiry also mentioned early voting. As the chapter title suggests, this report presaged a new approach to flexible voting. Whereas the JSCEM previously discouraged voting before Election Day, the 2007 JSCEM majority committee agreed that “not all electors necessarily want to take part in elections on Election Day” (JSCEM 2007, p.173). The AEC’s submission to the inquiry noted some of the reasons for increased early voting, including the co-occurrence of elections with school holidays (as for the 2016 federal election), growing demand for convenience or flexible voting, as well as changing work and social patterns and increased elector mobility (JSCEM 2007, p.183). As a result of this evidence and support for early voting from other inquiry participants, the JSCEM found that early voting needed to be managed and supported as it might represent a new form of electoral participation. It even recommended the AEC investigate expanding opportunities to provide early voting services, although this recommendation was qualified by a condition the AEC not necessarily offer early voting services in areas with low demand for early voting (JSCEM 2007, p.194).

Building on the spirit of this recommendation and for the first time ever, the JSCEM also supported evidence calling for early votes to be counted on Election Day. Pages 191 to 194 of the report discussed the evidence the committee received about early vote counting. All major political party submissions to the inquiry supported counting early votes on Election Night – hence confirming barrier one, two and four’s findings about partisan agreement on this policy measure – with the AEC supporting the measure as a way to ameliorate the effects of increased demand (JSCEM 2007, p.196). The JSCEM thus recommended that early votes
cast an in an elector’s Home Division be treated as ordinary votes; this was included in the 2010 Bill.

The JSCEM’s influence on the 2010 Bill was therefore substantial. After a period of four elections the committee finally endorsed early voting via a range of recommendations, including counting early votes on Election Night as per the 2010 Bill. Can we attribute these changes to a new political environment, or something else? It is tempting to conclude that the Rudd government’s landslide election in 2007, and subsequent attempts to revise Howard’s electoral reforms, influenced the JSCEM. Even the chapters in the 2007 JSCEM report sound ‘hopeful’; for instance Chapter Three is “Enabling the Franchise”. This supports a conclusion, as argued by Kelly (2006, p.p.5-7), that Labor was notionally geared toward supporting electoral participation, even for the most marginalised social groups. Labor’s efforts to repeal prisoner voting restrictions enacted by Howard are evidence of this (Kelly 2006, p.6).

Nevertheless, interview evidence suggests a more complex position. While several interviewees agreed with the idea that the Labor reform agenda certainly influenced the JSCEM’s deliberations, and hence the 2010 Bill, some also said that the 2010 Bill and cross-party support for early voting spoke to an evolutionary acceptance of flexible voting consistent with the way the Parliament had always approached electoral reform – playing catch up, rather than as initiator of reform. Echoing comments in the AEC’s submission about changing work and lifestyle patterns, Senator Scott Ryan said that early voting was definitely “on the rise” due to changing demographic conditions across all Australian jurisdictions (Ryan 2014, p.4). Of the electoral commissioners interviewed, Liz Williams, Deputy Victorian Electoral Commissioner (Williams 2014, p.2), Warwick Gately, Victorian Electoral Commissioner (Gately 2014, p.2), Bill Shepheard, former NT Electoral Commissioner (Shepheard 2013, p.p.3-4) and Kaye Mousley, then South Australian Electoral Commissioner (Mousely 2014, p.p.2-3), agreed that convenience voting was being driven by increasing demand amongst electors for flexible access to voting services, as well as societal change. In fact, all 20 interviewees believed that early voting was related to convenience. In this way, while the JSCEM probably facilitated electoral reform, the trend to early voting was already clear. In reviewing the institutional development of Australia’s electoral systems and the role played by parliaments, Uhr (2000, p.7) noted that “partisan interests converge at some points and diverge at others, so that ‘the will of Parliament’ exists…as an institutional interest distinct in many respects from the immediate partisan interests of many of the elected
representatives” (Uhr 2000, p.8). In other words, the Parliament responded to early voting once the data was clear.

**Barrier Six – role of electoral commission**

Unlike the JSCEM’s oscillating position on early voting, the AEC has repeatedly advocated ways to speed up election results over the past two decades, including different administrative treatments for early votes. The AEC first proposed counting early votes on Election Night in its submission to the JSCEM’s inquiry into the 1993 federal election. The main arguments for the procedure, it noted at the time, were repeated to the JSCEM in 1996, 1998, 2001 and 2007. These were:

- Reducing the likelihood of a delayed election result; and
- Decreasing the work required to scrutinise declaration results as early votes cast in the elector’s Home Division would not require a declaration voting certificate (Explanatory Memorandum 2010, p.4).

In summary, the AEC therefore proposed counting Home Division early votes on Election Night on no less than five occasions. Each time the proposal was voted down by a Liberal-majority JSCEM, on the basis that the JSCEM wished to encourage Election Day voting. With Labor’s election in 2007 and control of JSCEM, the measure was ultimately supported and formed the basis of the 2010 Bill early voting reforms. While party politics, over time, is an important factor in this barrier, the AEC’s advocacy for counting reform is equally influential.

**Reform One: Conclusions**

Referring to Figure 5.1, with the passage of the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010* (Cwth) the Parliament enacted the first changes to early voting administration for federal elections in 25 years. While the Bill essentially involved technical amendments to permit early votes cast in an elector’s Home Division to be treated as ordinary votes for vote counting purposes, it signalled a new approach to early voting from the Parliament and acceptance of the growing demand for flexible voting services at federal elections.

The reforms came about due to three factors captured by the assessment framework. Firstly, the framework demonstrated that partisan interest did not influence the passage of the 2010
Bill. As demonstrated in barriers three and four and by the interview data, there was bipartisan support for ensuring a high number of early votes would not affect an election result. The Rudd government’s electoral reform agenda, based on opposition to the Howard government’s restrictive close of roll and provisional voting provisions, was a background influence, but did not affect deliberation in the chamber relating to the 2010 Bill’s early voting provisions. This finding supports Biggers and Hanmer’s (2015, p.201) conclusion that an overall political “narrative” can override partisanship when introducing liberalised early voting reforms. Treating early votes as ordinary votes facilitated faster counting. But it also, accordingly to the AEC (2014), stimulated interest in early voting – electors who voted early in their Home Division discovered at the 2010 federal election that the process was much the same as voting on Election Day.

Secondly, the 2010 Bill passed due to the influence of the JSCEM, coupled with the AEC’s long-term advocacy for Home Division early vote reform and increasing social and political acceptance in the Parliament of early voting. With Labor’s landslide election in 2007, the JSCEM reversed 15 years of opposition to the growth of declaration (early) voting. This included supporting the AEC’s reform agenda, and embracing new ideas around flexible electoral participation. Without including barriers five and six in the assessment framework, this inter-relationship would not be clear. We would also lack insight into why, when Labor was elected in 2007, there was a sudden embrace of the early voting and minor electoral reform related to it by the JSCEM; Labor only pushed for change in the knowledge the AEC had advocated for a new treatment for early votes for nearly two decades. This discovery justifies the modifications to Jacobs and Leyenaar’s (2011) framework for minor electoral reform. It also demonstrates that the framework can reveal detailed negotiations underpinning technical electoral reform.
2. Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013 (Cwth)

Barrier One – procedural superiority of the status quo

The 2013 Bill formed part of Labor’s continuing attempts to modernise Australia’s electoral legislation. The major difference between the 2010 Bill and the 2013 Bill was a leadership change in the Labor party in 2010; then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was replaced by his Deputy Julia Gillard, who led the party until just two months before the 2013 federal election when Rudd was re-elected by the Labor Caucus as Prime Minister following a last-minute leadership challenge.
Unlike Rudd, who, as shown in Reform One, maintained executive control over Labor’s electoral reform process via the green paper process, Gillard adopted a more de-centralised approach to electoral reform. Political finance reform was a key component of Gillard’s agenda. In October 2010 Gillard Labor introduced the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2010 (Cwth) which resurrected the Rudd Government Bill that had lapsed prior to the 2010 federal election. The Bill proposed to reduce donations disclosure threshold from $11,500 (current rate, CPI indexed) to $1,000 and remove CPI indexation, prohibit foreign donations, anonymous donations and introduce a claims system for electoral funding linked to expenditure. However, despite receiving support from then independent MPs Wilkie, Windsor and Oakeshott, the Bill was never revived in the Senate.

Gillard’s decentralised approach also extended to early voting reform. In contrast to the 2010 Bill, which was closely linked to Labor’s modernisation agenda, the purpose of the 2013 Bill was to implement electoral and voting measures recommended by JSCEM in its report on the 2010 federal election. Specifically, whereas the 2010 Bill was split into three separate legislative instruments, the 2013 Bill had two key clauses relating to early voting. The first repealed the requirement for an elector casting a pre-poll ordinary vote to complete a declaration; this was a further extension of the 2010 Bill in that the restrictions on counting Home Division early votes were removed, but ordinary voters outside their Division were still required to sign a declaration. The second amended the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cwth) to provide that an application for a pre-poll vote cannot be made before the Monday, 19 days before polling day. These clauses arose from recommendations 10 and 11 in the JSCEM’s report on the 2010 federal election, demonstrating again Gillard’s devolved approach vis-à-vis Rudd.

Using this approach, the Gillard government was keen to smooth out administrative and logistical issues arising from the continued growth of early voting. In his second reading speech Steven Smith, on behalf of then Special Minister of State Senator John Faulkner, said that the government was interested in enhancing the “pre-poll and postal voting experience for those embracing flexible voting methods” (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2012, p.13885). In this way, the procedural superiority of current arrangements for early voting, which had already been reformed via the 2010 Bill, was further surmounted under Gillard. However, as we shall see in barriers four and five, the 2013 Bill saw more partisan debate than the 2010 Bill.
Political tradition did not have a significant influence on the 2013 Bill, due to the Parliament’s focus on another Rudd / Gillard electoral reform; direct electoral enrolment. In 2012 the Gillard government, with the support of the Greens in the Senate, passed the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012* (Cwth) and the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011* (Cwth). These Bills respectively allowed the AEC to directly enrol and directly update eligible electors. Chapter Two described direct enrolment processes. The AEC is continuing its direct update and enrolment systems, in response to recent advice that there are still approximately 1.1 million eligible Australians who are not enrolled to vote (AEC 2016; Brent 2008, p.2).

In late 2009 the Special Minister of State asked JSCEM to examine the NSW *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment (Automatic Enrolment) Bill 2009* (NSW), the legislation enabling NSW’s direct enrolment program. In its submission to the inquiry the AEC stated that direct enrolment and update were “positive initiatives from the perspective of facilitating enrolment” (AEC 2010, p.2). The AEC reiterated its support for direct enrolment and direct update in its submission to the JSCEM inquiry into the 2010 federal election (AEC 2011a). A majority of the committee clearly agreed, and the first two recommendations resulting from the majority report of the JSCEM inquiry into the 2010 election were that Commonwealth legislation should be amended to allow the AEC to directly update and directly enrol eligible persons based on data or information provided to an agency approved by the AEC (JSCEM 2011). Following this report, in August 2010 the Victorian Parliament also passed direct enrolment legislation in time for the 2010 Victorian state election.

As discussed in Chapter Three, debate about direct enrolment has been turbulent. Providing an update on federal direct enrolment in 2016, Brent summarised the partisan implications of the debate in 2016:

…the Coalition, who claimed it would open the system up to abuse – an argument that made no sense at all because automation works against electoral fraud. The real reason the Liberals hated the idea was the same one Labor and the Greens rather liked it: the more comprehensive the roll (whether due to direct enrolment or simply to more engaged and motivated electors), the better for left-of-centre parties,
because the people who tend to fall through the cracks – such as the young, renters, students and itinerant workers – tend to skew to the left (Brent 2016, p.2).

Partisan debate around direct enrolment is also captured neatly in the JSCEM’s report on the 2010 federal election. While the majority committee supported modernising enrolment procedures due to evidence about a shrinking roll, the dissenting report argued against a direct update or direct enrolment system for the federal roll. Opposition Members and Senators were concerned about the integrity of the roll. The dissenting report argued that other government administrative data are often incorrect and that there cannot be sufficient confidence in the data for them to be used to populate the electoral roll. The dissenting report “claimed a particular danger in using data from state governments, as they may be outside the scope of oversight by commonwealth bodies such as the Commonwealth Parliament or Auditor-General. The use of direct update and enrolment would also eliminate the existing “paper trail” provided by a signed physical enrolment form” (Brent 2016).

The effect of the direct enrolment debate was to starve discussion about early voting of oxygen. Senator Scott Ryan, who participated both in the JSCEM inquiry and in debates over the two direct enrolment Bills, said that direct enrolment was the Liberal Party’s chief objection to the Rudd / Gillard / Rudd electoral reform agenda, because it took responsibility away from the individual for maintaining their enrolment details with the electoral commission. Ideologically, he said, “the party saw no reason why they couldn’t do this” and this probably affected how they saw other “developments” in electoral reform (Ryan 2014, p.p.8-9). Similar comments were offered by Daryl Melham, Chair of JSCEM at the time of the 2010 federal election inquiry (Melham 2014, p.11), Alex Somlyay, Deputy Chair of JSCEM at the time of the 2010 federal election inquiry (Somlyay 2013, p.4), Senator Lee Rhiannon, then JSCEM Member (Rhiannon 2014, p.2), and several state Members of Parliament.

Due to the primacy of debates about direct enrolment, and also because we know that partisan opposition to direct enrolment was not uniform – in Victoria for instance, in 2012 the Coalition-majority Parliament of Victoria’s Electoral Matters Committee supported expanding Victoria’s direct enrolment system – we can say with some confidence that the relative effect of political tradition was negligible on the 2013 Bill, and early voting reforms.
Barrier Three – systemic balance and efficiency

As seen in barrier one the Gillard government was interested in enhancing the “pre-poll and postal voting” experience for those embracing flexible voting methods (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2012, p.13885). The 2013 Bill amendments enabling early voting without a declaration are a logical extension of Labor’s efforts to increase access to flexible voting services.

Barrier Four – actors’ vested interests

In contrast to the 2010 Bill, where both the Coalition and Labor supported amendments to early vote counting to avoid potentially delayed election results, the 2013 Bill early voting reforms were contested by the Coalition, both through the JSCEM and in the Parliament. While this partisanship did not stop the legislation, it is worth discussing; this section focuses on the Parliament.

The Coalition had two concerns with the 2013 Bill. The first was the extension to the early voting period. The legislation as passed eventually increased the early voting period from 12 to 19 days. In the Parliament several Coalition Members argued this would lessen the focus on Election Day, posing a temporal challenge to Australia’s electoral rituals and traditions as theorised by Orr (2014, p.152) and Thompson (2004). The Coalition’s chief spokesperson in this case was then Shadow Spokesperson for Electoral Affairs (and JSCEM Member) Bronwyn Bishop. In her second reading speech Bishop was concerned that the legislation represented another step in the “idea that we now have an election period, not an Election Day” (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2012, p.1656). She said:

We do not; we have an election day. We have many regulations that say when you can have electronic advertisements—up to what date and so on—and speeches formally launching their campaigns are, for a variety of reasons, given by the leaders ever closer to election day. But a whole host of people can be voting before the speeches are made and before the manifestos, if you like, of the parties are put. This means that people who vote before election day are not given all the information which is given to people who are voting on election day (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2012, p.1656).

Senator Scott Ryan also argued that there should be a single Election Day, not a polling period (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2012, p.1823).
The Coalition also attempted to backpedal during the 2013 Bill debates, arguing that its support for treating early votes as ordinary votes in the 2010 Bill was not an implicit endorsement of liberalised access to early voting. Senator Ryan said:

The coalition agreed that the votes should be counted on Saturday night where possible, because it gave people a degree of accuracy about what the result of the election might be as soon as possible. [But] to mount a case that, because we now count them on the night, they are ordinary votes and therefore we should remove the hurdle and the certificate someone signs to access a [pre-poll] vote is nothing but a circular argument and a piece of trickery by this government (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2012, p.1823).

The Coalition’s second concern was about turning early votes into ordinary votes not requiring a declaration. Senators Bishop and Ryan emphasised the Coalition’s views around the integrity of the electoral roll and how the declaration acted as a deterrent to fraudulent voting. In this way, the arguments were similar to the Coalition’s, and Ryan’s in particular, in second reading speeches for the Protecting Elector Participation 2013 Bill and direct enrolment. Bishop summarised this position well in her second reading speech on the 2013 Bill:

The opposition feels very strongly about all the amendments that are being brought in by the government, whether it is initially automatic enrolment, automatic so-called updates or changes of address, or letting criminals vote. There are many things that are being done to alter what we consider to be the integrity of the process, which, should we be elected, we will certainly be addressing (Australian Parliamentary Debates 2012, p.1823).

Moreover, while the Coalition had a range of issues with the 2013 Bill’s early voting reforms, the Parliament passed the legislation, meaning the barrier was surmounted. Nevertheless, it is important to document partisan agendas at this stage as it foregrounds discussion in Chapter Nine about similar concerns by the Victorian Coalition about the loosening of the eligibility criteria for early voting in 2005 via the Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic). Both examples again support Biggers and Hanmer’s (2015, p.204) finding that early voting reforms are often not challenged during adoption but later, during implementation. The Coalition tried to curtail the early voting period despite previously supporting treating early votes as ordinary votes for vote counting, thereby implicitly supporting early voting.
Barrier Five – parliamentary oversight of electoral administration

The expansion of the early voting period was keenly debated by the JSCEM during its inquiry into the 2010 federal election. However, in contrast to the JSCEM’s report on the 2007 federal election, where both the Labor government and the Coalition Opposition committee Members supported treating early votes as ordinary votes for vote counting, reflecting a de-facto acceptance of the growth of early voting, the JSCEM from 2010 to 2011 was divided over early voting.

Recommendations 10 and 11 in the JSCEM’s final report eventually featured in the 2013 Bill. These recommendations were supported by the majority Labor committee. The majority’s position was similar to the 2007 JSCEM’s position on early voting; that flexible voting was growing in demand, appealing to more electors and the JSCEM and the Parliament should adopt relevant procedural and legislative changes to reflect changing elector habits. In its concluding remarks, the JSCEM noted that “the electoral system must be adjusted to respond to the changing expectations of the community” (JSCEM 2011, p.53). The Committee also pledged, as a whole, to monitor the uptake of early voting into the future with a “view to assessing any effects on the efficient conduct of elections” (JSCEM 2011, p.53).

In contrast, the Coalition disagreed with the majority committee’s view on early voting. The Coalition minority (dissenting) report contested two issues discussed in second reading speeches for the 2013 Bill; repealing the declaration required for early voting, and the longer early voting period of 19 days. Regarding the former, the Coalition argued the measure might “increase the likelihood of voter fraud and threaten the integrity of the electoral roll” (JSCEM 2011, p.188). Regarding the later, the Coalition was keen not to encourage convenience voting;

...[Coalition Members] believe that pre-poll voting should not open until the Monday 12 days before polling day, as opposed to the Monday 19 days before polling day as recommended by the Government members on the Committee. This would ensure that electors are still given ample time to cast a pre-poll vote prior to Election Day should they need to. The Opposition members are concerned that allowing pre-poll voting for 19 days prior to Election Day takes the focus off polling day itself, which is where the overwhelming majority of votes should be cast (JSCEM 2011, p.188).
Nevertheless, the Coalition’s position had limitations. It is notable that the Coalition did not advocate for the JSCEM to include early voting as a Bill issue in the JSCEM’s Bill inquiry. Occasionally the JSCEM receives a reference from the House to inquire into an electoral-administration related Bill. To this end on 28 June 2012, the Select Committee referred the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Procedure) Bill 2012* (Cwth) to the JSCEM for report. The JSCEM received submissions from several organisations, including the AEC, which referred to the early voting clauses in the Bill derived from the JSCEM’s 2010 federal election report, yet early voting was not specifically addressed in the final report; the report mostly addressed the Coalition’s concerns about curtailing political party involvement in postal voting, and some minor administrative issues. Logically, we might ask: if the Coalition members felt strongly about JSCEM’s two early voting recommendations/clauses in the Bill, why did they not include further discussion of these in the Bill report? Evidence from interviewees suggests a possible answer – that the Coalition was learning that early voting favoured the Coalition electorally. David Feeney, Labor Member for the Division of Batman, explained his perceptions of this as a Labor MP and former Labor campaign director:

I think the Libs have generally beaten us in postal votes – you know, in every campaign I’ve been the director of, we’ve worked very hard to compete with them and even beat them. But they’ve generally had the edge in postal vote campaigns because they’ve generally had more money than us. And because postal vote campaigns – I think this is becoming less true – but postal vote campaigns traditionally were for older demographics; and the older you are, the more likely you are to be Liberal (Feeney 2014, p.7).

Admittedly, this is a Labor view of a Coalition-biased electoral phenomenon. But the fact that several state-level interviewees also support this view (Phelps 2014, p.p.4-7; Finn 2014, p.p.1-3) suggests that the Coalition may have begun to learn, around 2010 being the first election where pre-poll ordinary votes were cast, that electors who cast this type of vote tended to come from demographics favourable to the Coalition who may have traditionally voted by post; this supports the AEC’s (2014, p.11) research demonstrating that pre-poll ordinary voters at the 2013 federal election were more likely to be cast by electors in older demographics, and what we know about the demography of postal voters as established in Chapter Three.
Accordingly, the thesis argues that these factors explain why the 2013 Bill and its early voting reforms passed unamended. While the Coalition Members used JSCEM as a vehicle to challenge the growth of early voting, privately, the Coalition saw early voting as an electoral opportunity. JSCEM thus played a smaller part in the 2013 Bill compared to the 2010 Bill, which largely legitimated the AEC’s long-term efforts to count declaration votes at the same time as ordinary votes.

**Barrier Six – role of electoral commission**

The AEC’s role in relation to the 2013 Bill was more complicated than the 2010 Bill. It again recommended a reform to liberalise access to early voting – this time, removing the declaration – but its capacity to advocate was affected by debate about the AEC’s role as an electoral administrator.

In submissions to JSCEM for the 2010 federal election inquiry, the AEC highlighted the success of the 2010 Bill reforms. By treating Home Division early votes as ordinary votes, at the 2010 federal election there were 996,875 pre-poll ordinary votes, representing 28 percent of all early votes cast in the election (AEC 2011, p.77). The AEC also advised the JSCEM that by including these votes on the Election Night count, it was able to count 11 million votes on Election Night, the most ever counted on a federal Election Night and approximately one million more votes than the 2007 federal election (AEC 2011, p.7). Reflecting this, the AEC advised the committee to recommend streamlining flexible voting services, including removing the requirement for early votes to sign a declaration when casting an ordinary vote (AEC 2011, p.79). It argued that removing the declaration would speed up the early voting process, creating new efficiencies in early voting, and reflect practice in Victoria and the ACT where electors were already not required to sign a declaration (JSCEM 2011, p.48).

While the majority committee supported these recommendations, Coalition members dissented to the recommendation, both via JSCEM and in chamber. Part of the reason why is related to an incident at the 2010 federal election involving pre-poll ordinary votes – as created by the 2010 Bill amendments – when ballot boxes containing early votes in the Divisions of Flynn (Queensland) and Boothby (South Australian) were opened before 6pm on Election Day. The matter arose shortly after Election Day when the AEC became aware of the “premature opening of ballot boxes in Oaklands Park in Boothby and Blackwater and Emerald in Flynn (JSCEM 2011, p.46). In response to the incident, the AEC engaged former
chief public servant Bill Gray to prepare a report on the matter, which was tabled with JSCEM.

Following Gray’s report, the Coalition began to challenge the AEC’s administration. The major driver for this was arguably Ed Killesteyn, the then new Australian Electoral Commissioner. Killesteyn, like Steve Tully in Victoria as we shall see in Chapter Nine, supported direct enrolment. While the AEC’s chief mission is to deliver the franchise (AEC 2016) – the VEC and the Queensland Electoral Commission (ECQ 2017) have a similar mission statement – with direct enrolment, the Coalition began to see the AEC’s advocacy as politically compromised. Senator Scott Ryan discussed this issue at length during his interview. He argued that the direct enrolment debate was one where the AEC had stopped being an electoral administrator and instead become a policy advocate (based on Brent 2016, p.2). The important context here is that the Coalition believes that a ‘full’ roll favours Labor and the Left. Ryan argued that the AEC had innovated too much, and that they had been ‘found out’ at the 2010 federal election in relation to the premature opening of early votes in Boothby;

What I contend is the AEC has put an inordinate weight on the size of the roll and turnout… I mean, the last election, WA said it wasn’t the first time that this current commission had screwed up; they screwed up last one… But, in Boothby, they unsealed boxes. So, they had a warning shot. And I think it’s because they say, “We want more people on the roll, and that is – we will sacrifice everything because of that”. They sacrifice it in training; they sacrifice it in the Election Day experience for the voter (Ryan 2014, p.p.10-11).

During interviews, some electoral commissioners also acknowledged there was an inherent political tension underpinning the organisational mission statement of many Australian electoral commissions to encourage electoral participation, and their role as independent electoral administrators. Warwick Gately, Victorian Electoral Commissioner, and Liz Williams, Deputy Electoral Commissioner, said that the VEC always tried to remain impartial and not intervene in policy debates (Gately 2014, p.3; Williams 2014, p.3); this is further explored in the Victorian context in Chapter Nine. Bill Shepheard, former NT Electoral Commissioner, also acknowledged that being “innovative” as an electoral commissioner was generally frowned upon, even in a context like the Northern Territory which experiences low turnout at periodic elections and has severe pockets of structural
electoral under-participation amongst Indigenous communities (Shepheard 2013, p.5). In this context, Shepheard said that “even being creative…was not necessarily viewed favourably by Parliament” (Shepheard 2013, p.4).

Due to this, we can conclude that the AEC did support further technical amendments to early voting in the 2013 Bill, including removing the declaration provision, and that it did indeed propose them. However, this came at a time of further scrutiny of how the AEC performed its role as an independent electoral administration, and some criticism from the Coalition about the AEC’s public positions on direct enrolment. As is explored further in the Conclusion, this greater scrutiny of the AEC reached a crescendo after the 2013 federal election.

Reform Two: Conclusions

Referring to Figure 5.2, the Improving Electoral Administration Bill did exactly as it said it would; it further refined the administration of the burgeoning demand for early voting services at federal elections, chiefly by removing the requirement for pre-poll ordinary voters to make a declaration and increasing the length of the early voting period from 12 to 19 days.

The 2013 Bill was more controversial though than the 2010 Bill. While the Gillard government conceived of the early voting reforms in the Bill as minor amendments to capture the growing trend towards flexible electoral participation at federal elections, the government and Coalition Opposition were engaged, and perhaps side-tracked, by the ideological battle over Labor’s direct enrolment legislation, which passed Parliament in 2012. Political tradition did not have a direct influence on the 2013 Bill early voting reforms but it did cloud debate about the growth of early voting at federal elections. It also speaks to the level of the Coalition’s opposition to Labor’s direct enrolment legislation, and therefore makes a contribution to the Australian electoral literature addressing the implications of direct enrolment in the same vein as Brent (2008; 2016), Brent and Jackman (2007) and Hoffman and Brent (2011).

In this reform, the assessment framework highlights two intriguing findings about partisan interest. While the Coalition supported liberalising early voting in the 2010 Bill it backpedalled when it came to repealing the provision for a declaration for early voting. The chapter demonstrated how this position was influenced by the Coalition’s position on direct enrolment – it argued that the changed identity requirements in both procedures opened up the electoral system to fraud and impersonation – and systematised via the JSCEM. This
finding provides additional support for Biggers and Hanmer (2015, p.206) view that early voting reforms are usually challenged during the implementation phase. However, the chapter also demonstrated that the Coalition’s opposition to the 2013 Bill was only ‘skin deep’; interview data, and barrier five, suggests that the Coalition had good reasons for not opposing the 2013 Bill early voting provisions more strongly because it thought that it might ultimately benefit from them. In this way, this finding is consistent with Kelly’s (2008) view about partisanship and Australian electoral reform; reform might be supported but then dropped for an electoral outcome. As to whether this is form of cartelisation (Marsh 2006) or something closer to Strom’s (1990) strategic coordination, a better perspective may be Katz’s argument that parties sometimes support reforms for odd reasons (Katz 2005, p.72). In this case, if the Liberal Party was aware that pre-poll ordinary votes leant in their favour, perhaps it made more sense to ‘be quiet’; doing so would confer greater legitimacy on the party’s objections to direct enrolment.

A final discussion point to emerge from Reform Two is the AEC’s influence on minor reform. In contrast to Reform One, where the AEC had a longstanding interest in seeing early votes counted on Election Day – so as to avert potentially delayed election results – in Reform Two the AEC’s two recommendations emanated from the 2010 federal election and its administration of pre-poll ordinary voting. Through barrier six the chapter demonstrated that this perturbed the Coalition Opposition, who felt that the AEC’s policy innovation may have had political ramifications. Arguments in barrier five also provide further evidence of a growing politicisation of electoral administration at the federal level, and a renewed interest in the AEC’s role as an arbiter of public policy advice in relation to electoral administration (Douglas 2015). This work presages the ‘lost votes’ saga at the 2013 federal election.
This chapter examined how the Parliament of Australia adopted two separate early voting reforms, via the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010* (Cwth) and the *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013* (Cwth). Through these minor legislative reforms, the most common type of early vote, one cast in an elector’s Home Division, were treated as ordinary votes for vote counting purposes. The early voting period for federal elections was also increased from 12 to 19 days, and early voters were no longer required to sign a declaration. Combined, these are the most significant changes to early voting practice at federal elections since 1993; this chapter is the first attempt to analyse why these reforms came about, and what factors influenced them, in the Australian electoral literature.
Regarding barriers one and two, the chapter demonstrated that the procedural superiority of the status quo – that is, of not responding to the growing demand for early voting with administrative change – was easily surmounted. These effects were slightly different though for the 2010 and 2013 Bill reforms. In 2010, the Labor government’s electoral reform agenda via then Prime Minister Rudd’s green paper reform process correctly conceptualised the increase in early voting as part of a growing trend towards flexible electoral participation at federal elections. Responding to this, the AEC, via the JSCEM, proposed treating early votes as ordinary votes for vote counting, which was supported by both the Labor government and the Coalition. In 2013 though bipartisan consensus around early voting had evaporated somewhat as the Coalition linked Labor’s attempts at reform in the 2013 Bill to its ideological concerns about direct enrolment and electoral integrity. Nevertheless, considered together, both barriers, enhanced by the interview data, explain the influence of political tradition at the time.

Regarding barrier four, it is clear that partisan interest was not necessarily a driver of – or barrier to – the 2010 or 2013 early voting reforms. In 2010 both Labor and the Coalition supported measures to prevent a delayed election result. In 2013, the situation was more complicated. As documented by Brent (2006, p.4), Labor benefits electorally when more people are enrolled, turn out to vote (and probably vote early). The Coalition was aware of this by 2013. However, interview evidence indicates that, around this time, there was a growing awareness in the Coalition about the rise of pre-poll ordinary voting and the similarities between these electors and traditional Coalition constituencies in postal voting. This explains and contextualises the Coalition’s varied positions on early voting through the JSCEM. This case study is a perfect fit for Biggers and Hanmer’s (2015) typology for explaining the adoption and implementation of early voting reforms, albeit in an Australian context.

Barriers five and six demonstrate that the JSCEM and the AEC influenced both sets of early voting reforms. In 2010 the JSCEM legitimated the AEC’s calls for early votes to be counted on Election Night, which the AEC had made for nearly 20 years; obviously, we must factor in the election of a Labor government in 2007 but the importance of the change cannot be underestimated. In 2013 the JSCEM’s recommendations 10 and 11 eventually featured in the 2013 Bill. The crucial difference between 2010 and 2013 here is that the AEC’s role as an independent electoral authority was questioned by the Coalition via the JSCEM, and the Parliament. While there is no doubt that the AEC remains impartial and independent,
questions about the relationship between the AEC’s organisational mission to encourage full electoral participation and the political ‘relativities’ of this aim, were raised during the 2013 Bill debates. Similar questions are also theorised by Tham (2013) in his paper on deliberative democracy; Reader (2014a, p.515) also addresses these concerns in his discussion about the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee and the introduction of direct enrolment.
Chapter Six: Early voting at federal elections 2007-2013; quantitative analysis

Having analysed the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010 (Cwth) and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013 (Cwth) in Chapter Five, this chapter presents the results and analysis from the voter turnout models for the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections in response to the thesis’ second research question concerning the impact of early voting on voter turnout at federal elections. The chapter finds that the Resources model of turnout was not a strong predictor of early voting at 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections. However, the chapter presents evidence of positive association between early voting and the one-year address change variable in the Social-Cultural model. It also finds a strong positive association between early voting and less partisan contests at the early vote centre count.

The chapter first reviews descriptive statistics for the dependent variable – the rate of early voting in person at the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections. After reviewing descriptive statistics for the independent variables in the four turnout models, the chapter then regresses early voting at the three federal elections against the four models of voter turnout developed in Chapter Three. In contrast to Chapters Eight and Ten, the chapter utilises an additional three independent variables for the Political model, owing to a lack of available data on early voting centres at the three federal elections in this thesis. The chapter concludes with analysis from the turnout models, and mixed-methods conclusions.33

Early voting at federal elections – in numbers

Like Victoria and NSW early voting at federal elections has increased significantly over the study period. Some commentators and the AEC were expecting a significant increase in early voting at the 2016 federal election due to the election period falling in the winter school holiday period in much of the country (AEC 2016; McIlroy 2016). Expectedly, approximately 2.5 million Australians voted early in person over a three-week early voting

33 It is worth re-mentioning key terminology used in Chapter Five. In this chapter there are two types of early votes: pre-poll ordinary votes, which are votes cast by an elector in their Home Division, and pre-poll declaration votes, which are votes cast by an elector outside their Home Division. The major difference between the two is that the latter category requires a declaration whereas the requirement for a declaration in the former was repealed by the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013 (Cwth). Unfortunately the data for these two vote types was not available unsegregated; i.e., split into ordinary and declaration early votes. While this segregation would have allowed sharper insights into the second research question for federal elections, the conclusions in this chapter are still noteworthy for the Australian electoral literature.
period (AEC 2016, p.2), with 27 percent of electors voting early in person or by post (AEC 2016, p.1).

General elections

As seen in Figure 6.1, early voting at federal elections has increased significantly since 1998. There was a 220 percent increase in early voting between the 2007 and 2013 federal elections, compared to a 55 percent increase between the 2004 and 2007. As shown in Chapter Ten this mirrors the extraordinary growth of 400 percent in early voting between the 2002 and 2015 Victorian state elections. Focusing on the 2013 federal election, about one in four (26.4 per cent or 2.5 million) votes was cast early: measured with the postal voting figure, nearly four million electors voted before Election Day in 2013. This is larger than the total number of electors enrolled for the 2014 Victorian state election. In addition, referring to Figure 6.2, postal voting at federal elections is also increasing although at a much slower pace than pre-poll ordinary votes.

Referring to table 6.1 and specifically the 2013 federal election, there are no particular patterns among rural, urban and metro areas evident in the federal data. Three demographically dissimilar Divisions recorded the highest rates of early voting (Melbourne 38.4 percent, Hinkler 34.5 percent and Fraser 33.64 percent respectively). At one level these results are understandable given general trends at the state-level relating to early voting. The ACT has the highest rates of early voting in Australia, with nearly 34 percent of all electors casting an early vote at the 2016 ACT Legislative Assembly election (Elections ACT 2016). Fraser Division, prior to its replacement via redistribution with Fenner Division in 2016, encompassed Canberra’s northern suburbs, including Belconnen, Gungahlin, North Canberra and also the Jervis Bay Territory. Further, Melbourne Division is in Victoria, where early voting has increased dramatically in recent times. Melbourne Division is also diverse, with a high student population; with the 2013 election falling over winter recess / holidays for the tertiary sector many electors may have voted early.

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34 Early voting in the ACT is conducted over a three-week period. There are only 245,000 eligible electors in the Territory, and five Legislative Assembly Districts. Further, any ACT elector may vote early; most early voting centres also have electronic voting kiosks.

Figure 6.1: Rates of early voting and postal voting at federal elections, 1998-2013


Figure 6.2: Turnout types at federal elections, 1906-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total turnout %</th>
<th>Total postal votes %</th>
<th>Total early votes %</th>
<th>Early vote as % of turnout</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Melbourne (Vic)</td>
<td>90.69</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>38.40</td>
<td>53.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinkler (Qld)</td>
<td>94.53</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>34.54</td>
<td>43.38</td>
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<td>Fraser (ACT)</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>33.64</td>
<td>38.97</td>
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<td>8.94</td>
<td>32.81</td>
<td>41.75</td>
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<td>Indi (Vic)</td>
<td>95.11</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>31.92</td>
<td>43.60</td>
</tr>
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<td>92.61</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>31.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leichhardt (Qld)</td>
<td>91.28</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>31.65</td>
<td>38.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra (ACT)</td>
<td>94.79</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>29.27</td>
<td>34.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmore (NSW)</td>
<td>94.27</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>29.17</td>
<td>35.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingiari (NT)</td>
<td>75.42</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>29.16</td>
<td>32.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**By-elections**

The increase in early voting is less clear at recent federal by-elections. Figure 6.3 shows turnout data for federal by-elections from 2005 to 2014; by-elections in federal Divisions are relatively uncommon, with 15 held since 1999. In contrast to NSW and Victorian state by-elections, where there has been a gradual, steady increase in early voting at by-elections, the results in Figure 6.3 are mixed. While the 2008 Gippsland Division by-election saw considerable early voting – it is a predominantly rural Division and the equivalent state-level District of Gippsland East has a long history of early voting – there is less separation between the early voting and postal voting figures in the Higgins, Bradfield and Griffith Division by-elections. Indeed, in Griffith there were actually more postal votes; this could be due to the strong history of postal voting in Queensland, as briefly discussed in Chapter Three. Based on the data then, if any pattern is discernible, it is that all these by-elections occurred in Divisions that were not marginal; Higgins (in Melbourne’s inner-Eastern suburbs), Bradfield (in Sydney’s North Shore) and Griffith (former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s seat and solid Labor territory in Brisbane) and safe Liberal, Liberal and Labor seats respectively.
Descriptive statistics – dependent variable

Table 6.2 lists descriptive statistics for early voting at the three federal elections in this thesis. The data are mostly normally distributed, with a slight positive skewness – as we shall see in Chapters Eight and Ten this reflects trends in the NSW and Victoria data, indicating that early voting ‘fanned out’ to the majority of electorates. In 2007 the mean number of early votes cast in a House of Representatives Division was 7156.49. The maximum was 21142.0. By 2010, the mean number of early votes in House of Representatives Division increased to 10622.553, increasing again in 2013 to 15644. Mean early voting in person for federal elections therefore doubled between 2007 and 2013.

Table 6.2: Descriptive statistics, early voting, federal elections, 2007-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 federal election</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early voting</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>2836.0</td>
<td>21142.0</td>
<td>7156.490</td>
<td>3132.3045</td>
<td>1.736 (0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 federal election</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4190.0</td>
<td>26529.0</td>
<td>10622.553</td>
<td>4040.3255</td>
<td>1.404 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 federal election</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2786.0</td>
<td>43875.0</td>
<td>15644.407</td>
<td>7342.2140</td>
<td>.737 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Descriptive statistics – independent variables

Tables 6.3 to 6.5 list descriptive statistics for the independent variables in this chapter. Like the dependent variable there is general uniformity in the statistics. As we shall see in Chapters Eight and Ten for NSW and Victorian state elections, most of the socio-economic and socio-cultural variables display a slight positive skewness, with consistent patterns across the three federal elections. Some political and electoral / institutional variables have a slight negative skewness – the closeness of the 2CP between the first and third candidate is negatively skewed (-0.250 in 2007, -0.011 in 2010 and -0.298 in 2013), as is enrolment, which is skewed negatively (-0.851 in 2007, -0.436 in 2010 and -0.738 in 2013) – but again, these data patterns are consistent across the three-election dataset. However, the voter turnout data, variable 14, requires further treatment. It is strongly negatively skewed across the three elections – (-4.40 in 2007, -4.24 in 2010 and -4.57 in 2013). At first glance, the data seems problematic. But there is an explanation for the data we can connect to the literature on Australian electoral participation. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, turnout at federal
elections has declined (AEC 2014). We would expect therefore to see a slight negative skewness in distributions using aggregate data.

Table 6.3: 2007 federal election House of Representatives Divisions / 2006 ABS Census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>39380.0</td>
<td>89585.0</td>
<td>69083.780</td>
<td>8518.1799</td>
<td>.151 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2858.0</td>
<td>27124.0</td>
<td>7809.180</td>
<td>3710.0459</td>
<td>1.835 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6832.0</td>
<td>80089.0</td>
<td>29370.120</td>
<td>15627.8463</td>
<td>.510 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>5029.0</td>
<td>859.226</td>
<td>1082.1511</td>
<td>1.443 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address 1-year prior to Census</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>11513</td>
<td>39081</td>
<td>20428.84</td>
<td>5237.676</td>
<td>.880 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-343.0</td>
<td>41802.0</td>
<td>14824.180</td>
<td>10582.2583</td>
<td>.659 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>10700.0</td>
<td>41638.0</td>
<td>28334.373</td>
<td>6206.4797</td>
<td>.250 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP early voting centre count</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>5994.0</td>
<td>1228.400</td>
<td>1130.5299</td>
<td>1.890 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>7.027</td>
<td>1.5671</td>
<td>.560 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historically elected</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.2800</td>
<td>.45050</td>
<td>.990 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot position</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.2673</td>
<td>.44403</td>
<td>1.104 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginality</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0333</td>
<td>.85465</td>
<td>.064 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>57641.0</td>
<td>122447.0</td>
<td>90976.927</td>
<td>7650.1077</td>
<td>.851 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>81.26</td>
<td>96.47</td>
<td>94.7104</td>
<td>1.77107</td>
<td>-4.400 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal rate</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>9.49</td>
<td>3.9493</td>
<td>1.29010</td>
<td>1.640 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise) 150


Table 6.4: 2010 federal election House of Representatives Divisions / 2011 ABS Census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (std. error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>40897.0</td>
<td>102891.0</td>
<td>67156.627</td>
<td>11099.3657</td>
<td>.489 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6611</td>
<td>63706</td>
<td>21749.63</td>
<td>12926.364</td>
<td>1.290 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>807.0</td>
<td>79699</td>
<td>35209.18</td>
<td>18770.438</td>
<td>.398 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>.0812</td>
<td>5415.2001</td>
<td>950.1993</td>
<td>1164.2998</td>
<td>1.344 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address 1-year prior to Census</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>11538.0</td>
<td>43601.0</td>
<td>21158.500</td>
<td>5700.9826</td>
<td>1.163 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>771.0</td>
<td>45716.0</td>
<td>16088.300</td>
<td>10941.7327</td>
<td>.646 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6661.0</td>
<td>59253.0</td>
<td>30978.880</td>
<td>8772.6140</td>
<td>-.011 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP early voting centre count</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-69.0</td>
<td>1988.0</td>
<td>538.953</td>
<td>424.6790</td>
<td>1.160 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>5.660</td>
<td>1.6419</td>
<td>.855 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historically elected</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>3.307</td>
<td>1.6546</td>
<td>.860 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot position</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.2133</td>
<td>.41103</td>
<td>1.414 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginality</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.9600</td>
<td>.88901</td>
<td>.079 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>59891.0</td>
<td>124294.0</td>
<td>93912.460</td>
<td>8612.5338</td>
<td>-.436 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>75.87</td>
<td>95.65</td>
<td>93.1677</td>
<td>2.06997</td>
<td>-4.247 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal rate</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>14.06</td>
<td>5.5544</td>
<td>1.89191</td>
<td>1.921 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise) 150


145
Table 6.5: 2013 federal election House of Representatives Divisions / 2011 ABS Census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (std. error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>40897.0</td>
<td>102891.0</td>
<td>67156.627</td>
<td>11099.3657</td>
<td>.489 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6611</td>
<td>67306</td>
<td>52749.63</td>
<td>12926.364</td>
<td>1.290 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>8074</td>
<td>79699</td>
<td>35209.18</td>
<td>18770.438</td>
<td>.398 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>5415.20</td>
<td>950.19</td>
<td>1164.20</td>
<td>1.344 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address 1-year prior to Census</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>11538.0</td>
<td>43601.0</td>
<td>21158.50</td>
<td>5700.9826</td>
<td>-.302 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeless 2CP</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>313.0</td>
<td>40614.0</td>
<td>16205.90</td>
<td>8221.2551</td>
<td>-.292 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeless between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>9630.0</td>
<td>51152.0</td>
<td>32645.42</td>
<td>8221.2551</td>
<td>-.292 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeless 2CP early voting centre count</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-89.0</td>
<td>1930.0</td>
<td>524.487</td>
<td>424.1435</td>
<td>.779 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>7.920</td>
<td>1.9126</td>
<td>.851 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historically elected</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>4.347</td>
<td>2.5037</td>
<td>.504 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot position</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.2819</td>
<td>.45143</td>
<td>.979 (0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginality</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.0133</td>
<td>.89732</td>
<td>-.026 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>63163.0</td>
<td>137987.0</td>
<td>98155.90</td>
<td>8404.2965</td>
<td>-.758 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>75.42</td>
<td>95.61</td>
<td>93.1887</td>
<td>2.08239</td>
<td>4.570 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal rate</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td>5.9055</td>
<td>2.06766</td>
<td>2.111 (0.198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Data treatment and results

As in Chapters Eight and Ten, OLS regressions are used to estimate Divisional-level associations between early voting at federal elections from 2007 to 2013 and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary qualifications in the Resources model of voter turnout. The results of the multivariate analysis are presented per model in tables 6.7 to 6.10. The dependent variable is the raw number of early votes in each of the 150 federal House of Representatives Divisions for the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections. These data are regressed by the four turnout models developed in Chapter Three.

This chapter introduces three additional variables for the Political Model: referring to table 6.6, variable ten, the ballot position of the winning candidate, variable 11, the marginality of the Division as assessed by the AEC’s marginality tool on the AEC’s VTR and variable 12, whether the winning candidate was historically elected (i.e. at the election before the corresponding election). These variables were added to enhance the Political model’s accuracy.

35 Despite the majority of variables being continuous numerical variables, several in this chapter were recoded. Marginality data was recoded “1” for “safe”, “2” for “fairly safe” and “3” for “marginal”. Historically elected data was coded “1” for “Yes” and “2” for “No”. The chapter also removed one variable in the Electoral / Institutional Model used in Chapters Eight and Ten relating to the number of early voting centres in each Division. It was not possible to determine an exact figure for the number of early voting centres at the three federal elections. While it was tempting to simply approximate the number of centres based on the AEC’s multiplier of roughly 8.2 centres per federal Division, this variable is omitted from the model to enhance the accuracy of the coefficients in the quantitative analysis.
results. Given the data comes from the AEC’s VTR it has a high degree of efficacy. Modelling the impact of these variables is straightforward. One of the three variables relates to the ballot paper; these data test whether there is an association between early voting and the ballot draw in a preferential voting system. This is a burgeoning area of interest amongst Australian psephologists given that the AEC, NSW Electoral Commission and the VEC have recently begun to collate and release this data for public reference. Further, there is an association, due to VEC research (VEC 2011; 2015) and data compiled by the Parliament of Victoria’s Electoral Matters Committee (2015, p.98), between electoral Districts with a high number of candidates and higher levels of informal voting, particularly in Districts with multicultural populations (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.99). In recent elections these Districts tend to have lower levels of turnout too, so including the ballot position measure may provide some insight into whether early voting is affected by voter’s capacity to complete the ballot.

The other two are alternative measures of political competition – whether a candidate was previously elected and the AEC’s marginality assessment. The first is self-explanatory and may offer insights into whether early voting, as demonstrated by the AEC in 2014, is habitual for some electors and influenced by incumbency (AEC 2014, p.11). The second, marginality, takes data from an AEC marginality assessment tool used by the AEC to classify seats (AEC 2015).
## Table 6.6: Variables, voter turnout models, 2007-2013 federal elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Variable measurement</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early voting in person</td>
<td>Raw number of early votes in person, as sourced from relevant AEC’s Virtual Tally Room. Vote expressed as a percentage of total votes recorded in Division.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Variable measurement</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a) Resources model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Employment</td>
<td>Number of adult male and females employed in the Division at the CED level, based on relevant Census.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, Commonwealth Electoral District (CED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>Number of people who hold tertiary qualifications in the Division at the CED level.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, Commonwealth Electoral District (CED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b) Social-Cultural model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Born overseas</td>
<td>Number of people born overseas in the Division at the CED level, based on relevant Census.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, Commonwealth Electoral District (CED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level of one-year population stability</td>
<td>Number of people who changed address one-year prior to the relevant Census in the Division at the CED level.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, Commonwealth Electoral District (CED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Population density</td>
<td>Number of people per square kilometre in the Division based on the relevant Census and CED data.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, Commonwealth Electoral District (CED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c) Political model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Closeness between two-candidate (2CP) preferred candidates</td>
<td>Two-candidate preferred count is a distribution of preferences to the two candidates who are expected to come first and second in the election. Usually, but not always, these will be the candidates representing the ALP and the Liberal or National Parties. Closeness is raw number of votes.</td>
<td>This service is provided by Australian electoral commissions as a courtesy to parties and candidates. It is usually given to media outlets for reports on results on Election Night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Closeness between first and third candidate</td>
<td>The raw vote difference between the first candidate and third candidate in the 2CP count.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Closeness between 2CP count, early voting centre counts</td>
<td>The raw vote difference between the two candidates in the 2CP counts conducted at early voting centres.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Number of candidates standing for election in electoral District or Division</td>
<td>The number of candidates standing for election.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ballot position of winning candidate</td>
<td>The position of the winning candidate on the ballot</td>
<td>Based on AEC VTR data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Marginality</td>
<td>The AEC’s assessment of a Division based on one of four levels of political competition based on previous election’s results: “safe”, “fairly safe” and “marginal”.</td>
<td>Based on AEC VTR data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Historically elected</td>
<td>Whether the incumbent candidate was re-elected in the election year.</td>
<td>Based on AEC VTR data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d) Electoral / inst. model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Enrolment</td>
<td>Total number of enrolled people in each Division. Data sourced from AEC’s Virtual Tally Room.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Turnout</td>
<td>The total number of eligible electors who voted divided by the total number of eligible electors the Division. Data sourced from AEC’s Virtual Tally Room.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Informal</td>
<td>Informal votes are those which are not completed according to the parameters set out in electoral legislation. Total number of informal votes in each Division.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.7: Early voting at 2007-2013 federal elections regressed by Resources model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1880.797</td>
<td>1901.405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.255**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R^2, standard error in brackets

0.038 (3072.0356)
0.052 (3933.1763)
0.013 (7279.8209)

Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table 6.8: Early voting at 2007-2013 federal elections regressed by Social-Cultural model (incorporating Resources model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1466.437</td>
<td>1859.917</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources model variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.307**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>0.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-Cultural variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.070</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.351**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R^2, standard error in brackets

0.100 (2971.6959)
0.220 (3568.8160)
0.126 (6850.3629)

Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
Table 6.9: Early voting at 2007-2013 federal elections regressed by Political model (incorporating Resources and Social-Cultural models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>992.692</td>
<td>2451.961</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources model variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.211*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-Cultural variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>-0.277**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political model variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 - Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 - Closeness 2CP 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 - Closeness 2CP early vote centre count</td>
<td>1.836</td>
<td>0.290</td>
<td>0.663***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 - No. of candidates</td>
<td>-198.74</td>
<td>174.898</td>
<td>-0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10 - Ballot pos. of winning candidate</td>
<td>-9.320</td>
<td>113.065</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11 - Historically elected</td>
<td>-136.21</td>
<td>537.907</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12 - Marginality</td>
<td>977.142</td>
<td>492.156</td>
<td>0.266*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R², standard error in brackets</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>(2581.5533)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
Table 6.10: Early voting at 2007-2013 federal elections regressed by Electoral/Institutional model (incorporating Resources, Social-Cultural and Political models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>13650.084</td>
<td>14782.746</td>
<td>89745.064</td>
<td>16098.846</td>
<td>-5840.140</td>
<td>28671.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 – Employment</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>-0.226*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.277*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-cultural mdl.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>-0.180</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-0.196*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td>0.482</td>
<td>0.291**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.288**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 - Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>-0.173</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 - Closeness 2CP 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>-0.152</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.155*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 - Closeness 2CP early vote centre count</td>
<td>1.596</td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td>0.576***</td>
<td>2.501</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>0.263**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 - No. of candidates</td>
<td>-196.259</td>
<td>172.227</td>
<td>-0.098</td>
<td>41.027</td>
<td>180.362</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10 – Ballot pos. of winning candidate</td>
<td>2.351</td>
<td>107.115</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>119.734</td>
<td>172.552</td>
<td>0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11 – Historically elected</td>
<td>-45.833</td>
<td>509.497</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>179.346</td>
<td>717.438</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12 - Marginality Electoral / Institutional model</td>
<td>500.732</td>
<td>481.983</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>743.663</td>
<td>500.399</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Electoral / Institutional model** |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| V10 - Enrolment | 0.191    | 0.044    | 0.469*** | 0.129    | 0.053    | 0.275*  | 0.483    | 0.091    | 0.537*** |
| V11 – Turnout | -200.593 | 163.332  | -0.114   | -1007.131 | 178.366  | -0.516*** | -276.780 | 322.422  | -0.079   |
| V12 – Informal | -347.648 | 222.224  | -0.143*  | -222.112 | 223.557  | -0.104  | 719.567  | 369.540  | 0.203*   |

Adjusted $R^2$, std. error in brackets:

- 0.397 (2431.3389)
- 0.406 (3114.5012)
- 0.314 (6070.3667)

Note: Significance measured at * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. 
Resource model

Referring to table 6.7, there is not a strong relationship between early voting and socio-economic variables at the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections. In 2010, just five percent of the variance in early voting at the Divisional level in 2010 was explained by the Resources model, with three percent in 2007 and one percent in 2013. However, there was a positively associated relationship between employment and early voting at the Divisional level. In 2007 the standardised coefficient for employment was 0.255 (p < .05); in 2010 it was 0.197 (p < .01) and in 2013 0.196 (p < .01). In 2013, for every one unit increase in employment in a federal Division, early voting increased 0.196, or approximately 130 votes based on the unstandardised coefficient. For all three federal elections the tertiary education variable in the Resources model was not associated with early voting. The fact the standardised coefficient decreased with each election from 2007 to 2013 further reinforces this finding.

Social-Cultural Model

In table 6.8, controlling for the two Resource model variables, socio-economic variables have inconsistent effects on early voting at the three federal elections in this thesis. In 2007 employment remained a significant predictor of early voting in federal Divisions (Beta 0.307, p < .01). In 2010 however, early voting was positively associated with tertiary education (Beta 0.341, p < .01). Neither socio-economic variable was statistically significant at the 2013 federal election.

With the introduction of social-cultural variables this model explains up to 22 percent of the variation in early voting at the 2010 federal election, and approximately 11 and 12 percent variation at the 2007 and 2013 federal election respectively. Here there are a number of consistent patterns. The number of people born overseas in a federal Division was negatively associated with early voting at both the 2007 (Beta -0.307, p < .05) and 2013 federal elections (Beta -0.210, p < .01), although this relationship was not statistically significant in 2010, despite a negative standardised coefficient. Further, there was a strong positive relationship between the level of one-year address change in a federal Division and early voting at the 2010 (Beta 0.430, p < .001) and 2013 (Beta 0.315, p < .05) federal elections. As shown in Chapter Ten this reflects findings for the Socio-Cultural model for several Victorian state elections, suggesting that Victorian electoral Districts and federal Divisions with high levels of short term population change exhibited higher levels of early voting, particularly later in the election cycle in this thesis. It is also interesting that the strongest model effects occurred
at the 2010 federal election, when the Labor government narrowly avoided losing office following Julia Gillard’s replacement of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister.

**Political model**

In table 6.9 illustrates further increases in the R² for the three federal elections in this thesis, suggesting political variables offer further insight into Divisional-level early voting. But model effects taper off by 2013, with only one statistically significant variable in 2013. In 2007 the Political model explains 31 percent of the variation in early voting compared to 10 percent for the Social-Cultural model; in 2010 this reduces though to 27 percent and then 14 percent in 2013, indicating that for the 2013 federal election political variables were equally as effective as Social-Cultural variables in explaining early voting relative to socio-economic variables.

After introducing political variables, employment was again positively associated with early voting (Beta 0.211, p < .05) but not in 2010, and tertiary education positively associated in 2010 (Beta 0.237, p < .05) but not in 2007 or 2013. These are remarkably consistent effects compared to the Social-Cultural model, suggesting there were election specific factors at play in these cycles. We also see that one-year address change remains positively associated with early voting in both the Social-Cultural and Political models in 2013 (Beta 0.356, p < .01). Early voting in 2013 was thus likely in Divisions with high levels of population change. Further, two political variables are strongly associated with early voting at the 2007 and 2010 federal elections; closeness of the 2CP contest at the early voting centre (2007 – Beta 0.663, p < .001, 2010 – Beta 0.358, p < .001) and in 2007, marginality (Beta 0.266, p < .01).

**Electoral / Institutional model**

Referring to table 6.10, the Electoral / Institutional model offers mixed insights into the influence of socio-economic variables on early voting in federal Divisions at the three federal elections in this thesis. Overall, it is noteworthy that the R² figures for the 2010 and 2013 models have increased significantly compared to the Social-Cultural and Political model, explaining up to 40 percent of the variance in early voting in 2010 and 32 percent in 2013. Socio-economic variables remain statistically significant later in the election cycle, with employment again negatively associated with early voting in 2010 (Beta -0.226, p < .05) and 2013 (Beta -0.286, p < .05), and tertiary education positively associated in 2010 (Beta 0.277, p < .05). But the fact that the effects are inconsistent – i.e., that tertiary education was
positively associated with early voting in 2010 but not at either the 2007 election – and employment mostly negatively associated means we cannot conclude a definitive relationship.

In 2010 and 2013 we also see that social-cultural variables are statistically significant, but with mixed effects. Early voting is negatively associated with the number of people born overseas in a federal Division across the three elections but the effect is strongest in 2010 (Beta -0.196, p < .01) and 2013 (Beta -0.314, p < .001). Address change is negatively associated in 2010 (Beta -0.291, p < .01) and then positively associated (Beta 0.370, p < .001) with early voting. Population density in 2010 is also positively associated with early voting (Beta 0.288, p < .01). Due to the diverse patterns here, it is again difficult to draw specific conclusions.

Electoral / institutional variables display more stable effects. Enrolment is positively associated with early voting across the three elections (2007 – Beta 0.469, p < .001; 2010 – Beta 0.275, p < .05; 2013 – Beta 0.537, p < .001). In contrast, turnout is negatively associated but only statistically significant in 2010 (Beta -0.516, p < .001). Informal voting is also negatively associated in 2007 (Beta -0.143, p < .05) but positively associated in 2013 (Beta 0.203, p < .05). These effects suggest that electoral / institutional variables had some impact on early voting.

Analysis and conclusions

This chapter has documented the increase of early voting at the 2007, 2010 and 2013 federal elections and assessed the impact of early voting on voter turnout at these elections. While the 2016 federal election saw arguably the most dramatic increase in early voting of the four most recent federal elections – and an associated increase in media interest in flexible voting and its implications (McIlroy 2016) – the 2010 and 2013 federal elections offer an opportunity to analyse the impact of the 2010 and 2013 amendments to early voting procedures for federal elections and their impact on voter turnout relative to the 2007 federal election.

The findings in this chapter have mixed implications for the thesis’ second research question, and hypothesis that early voting might be negatively associated with employment and tertiary education. In contrast to Chapters Eight and Ten, the Resources model is not a strong predictor of early voting in of itself. Model fit for the three elections was very low, explaining
a maximum of five percent of the variation in early voting at the 2010 federal election. Given the model effects are so small, what we can say from the Resources model is that employment was somewhat positively associated with early voting at the three federal elections in this thesis. The link between this conclusion and the hypothesis above is tenuous, although we can conclude that early voting was slightly positively associated with employment – a marker of greater resources, as noted in Chapter Three – at the three federal elections in this thesis.

However, incorporating findings from the Social-Cultural and Political models, the chapter demonstrates that early voting at the Divisional-level is robustly and positively associated across three model specifications with one-year address change. How do we make sense of these findings in light of the fact that the Resources model does not explain the variation in early voting, and referencing the literature about compulsory voting; referring to Chapter Three, Hoffman and Lazaridis (2013, p.41) demonstrated that there are pockets of suppressed turnout amongst inner-city, gentrified communities in Australia associated with high levels of rented dwellings and low levels of electoral enrolment (such as Melbourne District in Victoria, when less than a third of enrolled electors vote at the 2012 Melbourne District by-election), and Highton (2000) and (Knotts and Haspell 2006) argued that compulsory voting theoretically captures the ‘hard to get’ types who fall through the gaps identified by Hoffman and Lazaridis.

A plausible explanation is that there is an interactive effect between direct enrolment, population mobility and early voting. The gentrification literature suggests that the relationship between “moving and turnout largely reflects the need to reregister” (Highton 2000, p.117). Similarly, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) showed that shorter moves, versus long-term moves, allow people to maintain social connections and civic and political knowledge associated with their local area. As shown in Chapter three, mobility can be either behavioural – people move due to changing work or lifestyle conditions – or due to economic factors, such as housing instability (Geys 2005). In light of this, we can see that the impact of direct enrolment for federal elections in 2010 probably had some effect on early voting. In 2010 early voting was positively associated with tertiary education (Beta 0.277, p < .05), strongly negatively associated with turnout (Beta -0.516, p < .001) and positively associated with population density (Beta 0.288, p < .01) for the only time in the federal models. This combination of associations suggests that early voting in 2010 was positively associated with Divisions with higher markers of socio-economic wealth, such as education, higher
population density and low levels of aggregate voter turnout. These findings support the conclusion in the voter turnout literature that the disrupted social connections caused by moving are less of a deterrent to turnout than the need to maintain one’s electoral enrolment, despite Australia’s compulsory enrolment regime. This explains the vociferous debate about federal direct enrolment laws documented in Chapter Five.

Finally, findings from the Political and Electoral / Institutional models demonstrate that, as early voting grew in popularity from 2007-2010, there was a strong Divisional association between early voting and less partisan contests at the early voting centre count. These model effects were also estimated in the Electoral / Institutional model. While these findings do not imply causation, they do feed into the literature from comparable national elections internationally about an aggregate association between early voting and partisanship. Studying the likely impact of Bill C-55 (Extended Voting Opportunities; 39th Parliament, 1st Session) on voter turnout in Canada, Blais et al (2007) found that the decision to vote in advance “appeared to be motivated by an engagement in politics and by contact with political parties”; and, “those who identify with a party, and/or those who are contacted by a political party over the course of an election campaign are much more likely to vote in advance” (Blais et al 2007, p.25). While this research was based on survey data, the authors did note similarities between aggregate level findings in their dataset about the closeness of the electoral contest; as early voting increased, the gap increased (Blais et al 2007, p.25).

Chapters Five and Six – mixed methods observations

Combining the findings from Chapters Five and this chapter, we can now explore mixed methodological observations about early voting at the three federal elections in this thesis.

The first is that the AEC’s long-term advocacy for easier access to early voting – through reforms to the way early votes were counted, plus removing the declaration for early voting and extending the early voting period – probably had no consistent effect on early voting turnout at federal elections. If anything, the strongest Divisional-level associations between early voting and socio-economic resources occurred before the two reforms to early voting procedures studied in Chapter Five, and the introduction of direct enrolment in 2010. As explored in Chapter Eight and Ten, this could be because the AEC’s reforms were not explicitly designed to liberalise early voting procedures in the same way that removing the cumbersome declarations required for early voting at NSW and Victorian state elections was. The fact that the Resources model does not explain early voting might be expected.
Another finding relates to what political parties knew/know about the increase in early voting at federal elections, relative to statistical findings in the Political and Electoral / Institutional models about the Divisional-level relationship between early voting and partisanship. In Chapter Five it is clear that early voting was not on the Coalition government’s agenda throughout the 2000s, or early in the first Rudd Labor government’s electoral policymaking. Yet, as seen in the Political and Electoral / Institutional models, the closeness of the 2CP early vote centre count is a consistently strong, positive predictor of early voting; that is, federal Divisions with a larger gap between the two major party candidates at the early vote centre level tended to have higher levels of early voting at the three federal elections in this thesis.

How can we interpret this? James’ elite statecraft theory (2013) posits that elites will seek to manipulate the rules of electoral administration to secure election. However, with both major parties supporting the 2010 Bill, the chapter has demonstrated that federal early voting reforms were not affected by partisanship during adoption, only later during the implementation phase (Biggers and Hanmer 2015, p.206). In addition, in contrast to NSW and Victoria, where there was a government agenda to overhaul antiquated electoral legislation, Commonwealth legislation had been regularly adjusted throughout the 1980s and 1990s via a series of minor reforms following the ambitious Hawke government electoral reforms (Uhr 2000, p.2). Combined with evidence in Chapters Five, this suggests that political parties were not fully aware of the rise of early voting. This may explain the coverage given to a minor electoral reform issue like early voting in the Rudd Labor government’s green paper electoral reform process. While it is true that Rudd may have wanted to wind-back the Coalition’s opposition to expanding flexible voting services via JSCEM, Labor, on coming to power and gaining control of the JSCEM, was probably surprised by the AEC’s long-term advocacy for counting early votes before Election Day to avoid a delayed election result. As seen in Chapter Five, this is reflected in the interview data. In this scenario, evidence of a sustained, aggregate positive association between partisanship and early voting is a new contribution to the Australian electoral literature that has great relevance to Australia’s federally registered political parties.
Chapter Seven: Early voting at NSW state elections, 2007-2015

This chapter uses the assessment framework to investigate two reforms to NSW electoral legislation relating to early voting procedures; the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Act 2006 (NSW)* and the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Bill 2010 (NSW)*. In contrast to Chapters Five and Nine, this chapter reviews reforms to two modes of early voting; early voting in person and iVote, NSW’s electronic remote voting system. With the iVote data the chapter explores a further dimension relating to the thesis’ first research question; what historical, contextual and institutional factors led NSW to adopt, and recently expand, the world’s largest remote voting system? As we will see in Chapter Eight, there are good reasons to compare early voting and iVote turnout given iVote’s registration system. Mirroring findings in Chapter Five, this chapter finds that partisan interest played little role in the relaxing of NSW’s early voting laws in 2007. Further, remote voting was largely driven by the NSW Electoral Commission as a way to provide vision-impaired electors with a secret vote, with Colin Barry, the then NSW Electoral Commissioner, playing a key role in this process. The NSW JSCEM provided an important forum for the NSW Electoral Commission and stakeholders to lobby the Parliament for remote voting.

After describing the headline provisions in the two Bills, the chapter assesses the reforms against each of the six barriers in the assessment framework. The chapter ends with conclusions about the assessment framework and the drivers of these particular early voting reforms.

*What reforms?*

*Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Act Bill 2006 (NSW)*

In the lead up to the 2007 NSW state election the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government (CCQG) undertook a major review of the NSW Electoral Commission on the basis of which it recommended amendments to the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 (NSW)* to give the NSW Electoral Commissioner responsibility for overall management of election processes, direct supervision of returning officers and accountability for the accuracy of election results. Prior to the election, the NSW JSCEM’s inquiry into the administration of the 2003 election and related matters also recommended amendments to the 1912 Act.
These inquiries recommended a number of changes to the structure of NSW’s electoral administration which featured in the 2006 Bill, including:

- Renaming the State Electoral Office (SEO) the New South Wales Electoral Commission and to appoint the Electoral Commissioner on a fixed term basis;
- Giving the Electoral Commissioner direction and control over returning officers;
- Providing for returning officers to be appointed for a specified period of election;
- Bringing a number of registered general postal voter enrolment-related requirements into line with Commonwealth legislation;
- Regulating access to, and sale of, the electoral roll and introducing significant penalties for misuse of electoral information;
- Prohibiting the canvassing of votes within six metres of a polling place in line with Commonwealth legislation; and
- Removing the role of the Electoral Commissioner in the conduct of all union and statutory board elections.

The 2006 Bill also made a key amendment to early voting practice. Section 114 was inserted into the 1912 Act to allow “pre-poll electors to make an oral declaration as to their eligibility requirements”. This came into effect for the 2007 NSW state election. In its submission to the NSW JSCEM’s inquiry into the 2007 NSW state election the newly renamed NSW Electoral Commission noted that the amendment “hastened the voting process for electors and officials and cut down on paper, printing and handling costs” (NSW JSCEM 2005, p.55). It also aligned with the NSW Electoral Commission’s view about the growth of early voting and the need to provide more flexible voting options for NSW electors. Prior to the 2006 amendments, electors wishing to vote early at NSW state elections were required to submit two declarations: the first was applying for an early vote and nominating a grounds for the application; the second was signing the declaration for the early vote (NSW JSCEM 2005, p.55).

Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Further Amendment Bill 2010 (NSW)

On 16 March 2010 then Premier Kristina Keneally advised the Parliament of NSW that the “Electoral Commissioner will investigate Internet voting for visually impaired people of NSW improving their democratic right to a secret ballot” (NSW Electoral Commission 2011). The Electoral Commissioner’s feasibility report on a remote electronic voting system
(iVote) was sent to the Premier’s office on 23 July 2010 and tabled in Parliament on 2 September 2010. To give effect to the recommendations for remote voting in the report, legislative amendments were required. The *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (NSW) was amended by the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Further Amendment Bill 2010* (NSW).

The Act now provides the NSW Electoral Commissioner with powers “to approve procedures…to enable eligible electors to vote at a state Parliamentary election by means of technology assisted voting, being a method of voting where the eligible elector votes by means of a networked electronic device, such as by using a computer linked to the internet or by using a telephone”. Division 12A has three major components. The first determines who is eligible to vote; there are four categories of electors:

- Electors with vision so impaired, or the elector is otherwise so physically incapacitated or so illiterate, that he or she is unable to vote without assistance;
- Electors with disabilities (within the meaning of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977) and because of that disability he or she has difficulty voting at a polling place or is unable to vote without assistance;
- Electors living further than 20 kilometres, by the nearest practicable route, of a polling place; and
- Electors who will not throughout the hours of polling on polling day be within NSW.

This last provision about travelling electors did not come into effect until 2012, as prescribed, and so interstate and overseas NSW electors were only allowed to use iVote for the first time in 2015.

The second component determines the procedures approved by the Electoral Commissioner for technology-assisted voting, focusing on authentication, privacy and security and the production of printed ballot papers for scrutiny purposes. The third component required a review of the performance of technology assisted voting at the 2011 NSW state election “investigation by the Electoral Commissioner of the extension of technology assisted voting to all electors outside the State and other electors for subsequent state Parliamentary elections”.

In summary, the 2010 Bill created the regulatory architecture for remote voting at NSW state elections. While the NSW JSCEM has once again given its support to iVote’s continued use
at future NSW state elections in its most recent report to Parliament on the 2015 NSW state election (NSW JSCEM 2016), Division 12A remains unaltered from its first iteration in 2010.

Definitions

Referring to table 7.1, the 2010 and 2013 amendments to early voting administration fall within the minor and technical categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.1: Early voting reforms, NSW, 2007-2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Bill 2006 (NSW)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of reform</th>
<th>Major reform</th>
<th>Minor reform</th>
<th>Technical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportionality</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election levels</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballot structure</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral procedures</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Removing need for declaration for early voting; allowing NSW Electoral Commission to set location of early voting centres in high demand areas.</td>
<td>Renaming SEO to NSW Electoral Commission.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Further Amendment Bill 2010 (NSW) |

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description of reform</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extending remote voting to electors with disabilities, or those unable to reach a voting centre and outside NSW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot structure</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral procedures</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Creating iVote for limited elector cohort.</td>
<td>Allowing NSW EC to set iVote procedures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying the assessment framework

1. Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Bill 2006 (NSW)

Barrier One – procedural superiority of the status quo

In NSW in the early 2000s, there was a cross-institutional perception that NSW’s electoral legislation was out of date and required modernisation. The Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 (NSW) was structurally antiquated. Like Victoria’s electoral legislation prior to Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), NSW’s electoral legislation was over 100 years old and had been amended more than 30 times since 1920. In reviewing the history of the 1912 Act, the NSW Electoral Commission observed in 2013 that the Act “was itself a consolidation of other statutes dating back to 1843; and that since being enacted in 1912 the Act had been amended by 80 pieces of legislation (NSW JSCEM 2013, p.6). The NSW JSCEM’s report on the 2003 NSW state election noted:

Throughout the inquiry process many comments were made regarding the current legislation applying to elections in NSW, including the need for new electoral legislation that reflects the way elections are administered and conducted in the 21st Century” (NSW JSCEM 2005, p.xi).

NSW’s complex electoral architecture also affected the operation of the then State Electoral Office, now the NSW Electoral Commission. Unlike the AEC and the VEC, which were incorporated as statutory authorities in 1984 and 1995 respectively, the former State Electoral Office had limited legal responsibility for electoral administration beyond the actual conduct of elections. The tenure of the electoral commissioner was age-defined – they were required to retire at 65. Further, prior to 2005 the 1912 Act gave much of the effective responsibility for running elections to returning officers, not the electoral commissioner, reflecting a “by-gone era when it was difficult for an election to be coordinated from Sydney due to communication issues” (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2006, p.1131).

Both these issues were addressed in the 2006 Bill. The legislation made more than 120 different minor and technical amendments to the 1912 Act. The net effect of this was to draw together NSW’s electoral legislation into one place, in a similar way to what happened in Victoria in 2002 with the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) – this is discussed in Chapter Nine. Further, the State Electoral Office was renamed the NSW Electoral Commission and the
Electoral Commissioner was given 10-year terms, with a view to ensuring that a commissioner would oversee both a state and local government election cycle. The Bill also established a clear line of responsibility between the Electoral Commissioner and returning officers; officers were answerable to the Electoral Commissioner. This particular issue arose following complaints by a political party during the NSW JSCEM inquiry process about the “sloppy” work of some returning officers, which it was argued could create the perception that returning officers were not entirely impartial (NSW JSCEM 2005, p.xiv).

In these cases, there was obvious political support for legislative reform. In the second reading speech in the Legislative Assembly Graham West, speaking on behalf of then Premier Morris Iemma MP, discussed the consultative nature of the amendments and the various agencies that participated in the process:

> This bill implements recommendations made by the New South Wales Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the electoral districts commissioners and the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government. It also includes numerous changes proposed by the Electoral Commissioner as well as measures arising from an extensive consultation process (Parliamentary Debates NSW, p.1130).

The 2006 Bill also addressed voting procedures, including early voting. Interest in early voting was split into two sub-areas: the location of early voting centres in high-demand areas, and the apparent complexity of voting before Election Day at NSW state elections. Regarding early voting centres, the then NSW government had some concerns about access to early voting facilities in populated areas, notably the City of Sydney, following media reports that some electors could not locate the State Electoral Office early voting centre in the Sydney CBD and that the centre was less visible than the AEC’s equivalent federal election facility (NSW JSCEM 2005, p.55). In addition, ABC Election Analyst Antony Green36 told the NSW JSCEM that early voting at NSW state elections was unnecessarily complex due to the declaration requirements. Green said:

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36 Green often appears at JSCEM, NSW JSCEM and Victorian Parliament Electoral Matters Committee hearings to give evidence. In doing so, he appears in a private capacity, not representing the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
Pre-poll voting is unnecessarily complex at NSW elections. At federal elections, you simply make an oral application for a pre-poll vote, and sign the declaration envelope after voting… In the past, I have witnessed arguments between returning officers and voters, with voters being denied votes because they gave a wrong reason for requesting a pre-poll vote. I see no reason why the provision of pre-poll voting should not be simplified. I understand similar problems occur with other types of declaration votes. It seems ridiculous that voters going out of their way to cast a vote end up having to jump the hoops of an outdated act of Parliament. I do not see why the procedures associated with all form of declaration vote should not be simplified (NSW JSCEM 2005, p.56).

While these amendments were included in the Bill, it is difficult to ascertain the level of interest in these minor amendments to early voting practice vis-à-vis the broader modernisation agenda of the Bill. For instance, of the nine second reading speeches in the Legislative Assembly, the early voting reforms are only mentioned by West. In the Legislative Council, there was some debate about the early voting declaration clauses, but these discussions were overshadowed by the debate about several issues in the 2006 Bill relating to party campaigning, particularly the restriction of handing out how-to-vote material within six metres of a voting centre.

To conclude, there was cross-institutional support for modernising NSW’s electoral processes. Based on the evidence here, it is difficult to associate this support with early voting. However, barrier two offers additional insight.

**Barrier Two – political tradition**

There is no immediate link between NSW’s electoral and political tradition and the 2006 Bill changes to early voting. The 2006 Bill represented the first, systematic amendments to the 1912 Act since the 49th and 50th NSW Parliaments between 1988 and 1995. During these two parliamentary terms there was great enthusiasm for electoral reform, focusing on the voting system, although these reforms often produced convoluted outcomes for electors. For instance, the Greiner government changed voting procedures so that “so that ticks and crosses could not be interpreted as a clear voting intention. The government then held a referendum in conjunction with the 1991 election that used a ballot paper with two boxes, one for ‘Yes’, ne for ‘No’, and instructions to use a cross in one of the boxes” (Green 2013). There was a
huge surge in tick and cross votes on Legislative Assembly ballot papers, clearly induced by
the referendum, which was not corrected until 1995 by the Carr Labor government. Further,
at the 1999 NSW state election there were a record number of candidates for an Australian
Upper House election; 264 candidates nominated for 81 groups on a ballot paper measuring
one metre by 700mm (Green 2013).

As seen in barrier one, by the time of the 2006 Bill there was bipartisan support for
modernising NSW’s electoral legislation. Interview data suggests there is a link between
bipartisan support for clarifying the administrative framework for NSW state elections and
the early voting reforms in the 2006 Bill. Dr Peter Phelps, who was at the time of the 2006
Bill a senior member of the Liberal Party of NSW’s State Executive, said that there was
“probably some way to link…early voting reform to the whole idea of fixing up NSW’s
electoral system [to be more modern]” (Phelps 2014, p.4). The perception here, said Phelps,
was one of remaking the system to reflect what voters “were doing at the time, versus a
system where voters were told what to do by old legislation” (Phelps 2014, p.4). In this
context we can interpret Phelps remarks, as those of a former senior official in the NSW
Liberal Party, which was in Opposition at the time of the 2006 Bill, as support for making it
easier to vote early.

**Barrier Three – systemic balance and efficiency**

As noted in barrier one, there is little evidence of systemic concerns delaying the 2006 Bill’s
early voting reforms. In addition to the drive to modernise NSW’s electoral administration
demonstrated in barrier one, there was some acceptance of the need to harmonise NSW’s
electoral system with the federal system, and the benefits this might have for voting
procedures. In his submission to the NSW JSCEM inquiry into the 2003 NSW state election,
Green discussed why NSW should mirror federal arrangements for early voting in person:

“At federal elections, you simply make an oral application for a pre-poll vote,
and sign the declaration envelope after voting. Other states have gone even further,
simply crossing pre-poll voters off the electoral roll, removing even the need for a
declaration envelope (NSW JSCEM, p.56).

Accordingly, this barrier is surmounted.
In contrast to Chapters Five and Nine, in NSW there is some evidence of partisanship regarding the 2006 Bill and the initial adoption of the oral declaration voting provision from minor parties and, unusually, a government source. On the then Liberal Opposition side, there was support for the oral declaration provision. In his second reading speech Don Harwin discussed Antony Green’s evidence before the NSW JSCEM about the complexity of the early voting process at NSW elections, and called on the Parliament to adopt the relevant provisions in the 2006 Bill (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2006, p.2198). Then Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell said that the oral declaration was sensible and consistent with the Bill’s modernisation agenda. Importantly, O’Farrell mentioned private discussions he and Harwin had with Colin Barry, the new NSW Electoral Commissioner; these are addressed in barrier six.

However, amongst Labor government members, there were mixed views about the oral declaration. While Graham Watson, on behalf of Morris Iemma, praised the early voting provisions Henry Tsang, then Member of the Legislative Council, seemingly let slip his ‘real’ view about the eligibility for early voting when responding to Harwin’s question about the oral declaration:

> My response is that pre-poll and postal voting should not be available to simply anyone who declares they cannot attend a polling place on polling day. A voter should be required to show a geographical or other real barrier to attendance on polling day (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2006, p.2201).

Whether Tsang simply misinterpreted the provisions of the Bill in his response is hard to judge, but this exchange suggests that some Labor government Members were wary of an ‘open slather’ approach to early voting as promoted by Green in his JSCEM submission.

A cautious approach to flexible voting was also urged by the NSW Greens. While the Greens did not in principle oppose many of the minor and technical provisions in the Bill, during second reading speeches Lee Rhiannon, who is now Senator for New South Wales in the Australian Senate and participated in this inquiry as a former member of the Commonwealth JSCEM, challenged the oral declaration on the basis that it would make early voting easier, and that this disadvantaged smaller political parties because they did not have the resources to cope with measures to rapidly increase demand for early voting. Rhiannon argued that the
Bill would make it difficult for minor parties to campaign – the Greens were especially concerned about restricting campaigning within six metres of a polling place – and that providing such an advantage to major parties was “undemocratic” (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2006, p.2188).

**Barrier Five – parliamentary oversight of electoral administration**

The NSW JSCEM played an important role in creating institutional support and parliamentary awareness of the need to remove the cumbersome dual declaration for early voting. During the JSCEM’s first inquiry into the 2003 NSW state election, the terms of reference called for evidence about all aspects of NSW’s electoral administration, including methods to modernise electoral processes, the role of the State Electoral Office and pre-poll voting. However, despite receiving 15 submissions covering ‘hot topics’ in the inquiry, such as the need to reform the Legislative Council’s counting system (at the time, it was one of two PR counting systems in the world to rely on random draw preference distributions), the JSCEM received little evidence about early voting. Only Antony Green and the State Electoral Office referred to early voting; Green offered the sole recommendation. Based on an opinion piece written for the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 12 May 2004, he called for easier access to early voting at future NSW state elections by removing the dual declaration discussed in barrier one (Green 2004, p.2). Further, he called on the Parliament to reflect best practice declaration voting in other Australian jurisdictions, given that it was likely that more people would take up early voting at future NSW state elections (Green 2004, p.3).

Why did the JSCEM recommend removing the dual declaration on the strength of one expert opinion? To understand this we need to refer to the committee performance literature discussed in Chapter Two. In their seminal work assessing the performance of the UK House of Commons committees Russell and Benton (2011, p.81-83) theorised several different types of committee impacts, including how a committee might influence a public policy outcome. The most obvious influence is making a recommendation which is then included in legislation (2011, p.81). However, committees also perform an “agenda setting” function.

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37 The NSW JSCEM was established in May 2004 and was the first dedicated State parliamentary electoral matters committee, following the passage of the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment (Joint Parliamentary Committee) Bill 2003* (NSW) in May 2003, two months after the 2003 NSW State election. The committee’s first reference was linked to its formation; the House reference established both the committee and required the committee to inquire into the 2003 NSW state election. Referring to Hansard, we know the NSW JSCEM was essentially the product of a Private Member’s Bill sponsored by then Deputy Leader of the Opposition Duncan Gay. It was intended as another plank in NSW’s anti-corruption regime – whilst other agencies were oversighted by the Parliament, the State Electoral Office was not, nor was the Electoral Commissioner (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2003, p.466).

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drawing together a body of information on the topic of an inquiry, informed by expert opinion, from a variety of sources” (2011, p.82). In this instance, the new JSCEM allowed an expert witness, Green, to draw attention to a flawed administrative process in the dual declaration. This is a textbook case of what Renwick (2010, p.13) describes as partisans losing control of reform. Similarly, Rahat (2011) and Jacobs and Leyenaar (2011) explained that minor reforms often pass because they are “understood by a core group of supporters”. The NSW JSCEM’s inquiry allowed Green to air an administrative inefficiency that might otherwise have languished as a newspaper opinion piece; the NSW JSCEM aired a quality argument for change. Giving weight to expert views is thus another key strength of Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees.

In summary, despite strong institutional willpower to modernise NSW’s electoral architecture existing, the NSW JSCEM influenced the adoption of the oral declaration by allowing expert opinion to filter through the inquiry process. This is an important function of Australia’s electoral matters committees that is not fully addressed in the extant literature (Kelly 2008; Brent 2016).

Barrier Six – role of electoral commission

There is evidence that the State Electoral Office, and Colin Barry, the Electoral Commissioner, supported the modernisation drive for NSW’s electoral legislation. Barry, for want of a better term, ‘interacted’ with the NSW government and made proposals for reform through the Council on the Cost of Quality of Government Audit (NSW JSCEM 2004, p.i). Further, Barry, representing the State Electoral Office, made a submission to the JSCEM inquiry. Barry also directly lobbied and worked with the Cabinet; in early 2003 he made a submission to the Cabinet Office about potential amendments to the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 (NSW) (NSW JSCEM 2004, p.i). In doing so Barry reached out to the Opposition; in his second reading speech on the 2006 Bill, Barry O’Farrell credited “Barry's efforts to modernise the operation of the State Electoral Office” (NSW Parliamentary Debates 2004, p.1936).

We also know that Barry proposed removing the criteria for early voting to the JSCEM at the public hearings. While the State Electoral Office’s submission to the 2003 JSCEM inquiry only listed the criteria for early voting at NSW state elections, during his appearance at the public hearings Barry discussed simplifying the process for early voting:
...Nearly 200 words to tell you these different categories. When you sum them up what they all mean is one thing, I can't get to a polling place between 8am and 6pm on Election Day. That's the criteria. Get rid of all that – one criteria – I declare I can't get to a polling place on Election Day between the hours of 8.00 and 6.00 - that's what they all amount to. That's all a person needs to declare (NSW JSCEM 2004, p.48).

Further, interview data suggests that Barry ‘workshopped’ this with parliamentarians. Senator Lee Rhiannon recalled a conversation with then Opposition Leader Barry O’Farrell in which O’Farrell mentioned that the Electoral Commissioner thought that declaration voting needed to be simplified (Rhiannon 2014, p.7). Similarly, Dr Peter Phelps also felt, based on his knowledge of the NSW Liberal Party at the time of the 2006 Bill, that Barry supported making it easier for electors to vote on the basis that early votes were less likely to be rejected than postal votes; “Maybe Antony Green knows something?” (Phelps 2014, p.7). Phelps was correct: at the NSW JSCEM public hearings Green said:

“The Electoral Office would rather encourage pre-poll voting and I always encourage pre-poll voting to people as well because simply – I tell people if you've got a postal vote there's a lot more double-handling – there's a lot more reasons why your vote can be rejected from the count on a postal vote because you haven't signed it correctly or dated it correctly or witnesses it correctly or it doesn't agree with your application in some way” (NSW JSCEM 2004, p.16).

Accordingly, it is likely the then State Electoral Office helped ease access to early voting via the 2006 Bill.

Reform One: Conclusions

In 2006 the NSW Parliament passed a series of amendments to the 1912 Act to modernise NSW’s electoral administration, including a provision removing the dual declaration required for early voting. These amendments were the first, substantial changes to the 1912 Act in nearly 20 years. They were also a response to the changing nature of Australia’s electoral administration – by the time of the 2003 NSW state election it was unrealistic to expect the State Electoral Office to conduct elections without appropriate resources. Or to expect electors who wanted to vote early to have to sign two separate declarations – as one interviewee noted, more paperwork “than applying for driver’s license” (Franklin 2014, p.4).
Regarding barrier one, there was broad, cross-institutional support for modernising NSW’s electoral administration and legislation, although as shown in barriers one and two, it is not clear whether this influenced the early voting reforms in the 2006 Bill. As shown in Chapter Five and as we shall see in Chapter Nine, there was little, if any, partisan interest in early voting at the time of the 2006 Bill reforms in flexible voting. If anything, NSW Hansard and interview evidence suggests that the Opposition Liberal Party actually supported easing access to early voting, whereas some Labor government Members had reservations about allowing more NSW electors to vote before Election Day. This finding contrasts with findings in Chapter Five and Nine. Had the interviewees connected with NSW state elections in this thesis been familiar with the Bill debates, interview data may have shed more light on this finding.

One explanation for this competing conclusion about partisan intention may be the influence of the Electoral Commissioner on minor electoral reform. While we know that the idea for removing the dual declaration from the 1912 Act was Antony Green’s, and that Green proposed this to the JSCEM in his submission, Colin Barry, the new Electoral Commissioner, was obviously a skilled negotiator adept at working across multiple institutional fora. As shown in barriers two and six, Barry engaged the NSW government and Opposition in various ways to support NSW’s electoral reform agenda. While we do not have any direct evidence about Barry’s influence, it is plausible that Barry helped clarify minor and technical details of reform rather than the overarching policy drive to modernise NSW’s electoral architecture. As we shall see in Chapter Nine, Barry provided similar advice to the Victorian government during his tenure as Victorian Electoral Commissioner between 1999-2004. Such clarification was bi-partisan in nature, and therefore influential, in promoting technical reform. Reform was thus contingent (Shugart 2001) on the NSW Electoral Commissioner’s support.

The NSW JSCEM also played an important role in relation to the 2006 Bill. Most of the provisions in the Bill were derived from the JSCEM’s report on the 2003 NSW state election. However, the JSCEM’s real influence on the Bill was arguably linked to its establishment in 2004. By providing a forum for public debate about electoral administration and oversight of the State Electoral Office in line with the NSW government’s anti-corruption framework, the JSCEM performed several important functions, as theorised by Russell and Benton (2011, p.80), including agenda setting, drawing together arguments about reform and directly
influencing the government. Arguably the most critical of these was collecting and airing expert opinion.

Figure 7.1: Assessment framework chart, Parliamentary Amendment 2006 Bill (NSW)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of barrier – size relative to effect</th>
<th>Barrier status (Surpassed, Yes or No), short commentary on status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrier One: Procedural superiority of status quo</td>
<td>Yes, cross-institutional support for modernising NSW’s electoral legislation and functions of the then State Electoral Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier Three: Political tradition</td>
<td>No, political debate about electoral reforms probably obstructed at voting systems reform, and access to voting or distant voting more generally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier Three: The systemic balance</td>
<td>Yes, broad support for modernising NSW’s electoral laws, coupled with awareness of best-practice voting administration in other Australian jurisdictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier Four: Actors’ varied interests</td>
<td>No, part of report contents in findings in Chapters Five and Nine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier Five: Parliamentary oversight of electoral administration</td>
<td>Yes, NSW SECDEM was influential in 2006 Bill proceedings, directly influencing government. This also allowed expert opinion on technical matters from Antony Green and NSW Electoral Commissioner to ‘air’ publicly, paving the way for the removal of the dual declaration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier Six: Role of electoral commission</td>
<td>Yes, NSW Electoral Commissioner supported and provided advice to the NSW government about NSW’s electoral reform agenda.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2. Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Further Amendment Bill 2010 (NSW)

Barrier One – procedural superiority of the status quo

Like many Australian jurisdictions, NSW faces challenges providing voting services to electors who are blind or have low vision. Prior to the 2010 Bill there was substantial awareness amongst the NSW government, the Parliament and the NSW Electoral Commission about this challenge. This barrier addresses the NSW government’s response.
Blindness and vision impairment are conditions that may significantly affect an individual’s participation in democratic processes. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Australia has an international legal obligation to protect the right of all persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot; the AEC, NSW Electoral Commission and VEC have long supported these obligations (NSW Electoral Commission 2011; VEC 2015, p.44). However, the fulfilment of this right has proven challenging. At the time of the 2010 Bill’s debate in Parliament, there were approximately 70,000 electors in New South Wales who were blind or vision-impaired and “330,000 with other disabilities” (NSW Electoral Commission 2010). Most individuals with these types of disabilities usually vote by appointing another person to mark the ballot paper on their behalf. Obviously, this makes it impossible for the elector to cast a secret ballot (NSW Electoral Commission 2010). Further, as blindness and vision impairment tend to increase with age, “the total number of persons affected [is] anticipated to rise as the Australian population grows older” (Vision Australia 2016, p.3).

Against this background, in 2008 a blind elector lodged a complaint with NSW State Administrative Decisions Tribunal regarding lack of access to a Braille ballot paper at the 2004 Randwick council elections. He argued that the compromise made it impossible for him to have a secret ballot because he had to divulge his preferences to an elector official who would fill in the vote for him. The complaint was upheld (NSW Electoral Commission 2016).

In response to these issues, Kristina Keneally, the then Premier of New South Wales announced on 16 March 2010 that the “Electoral Commissioner [would] investigate Internet voting for visually impaired people of New South Wales improving their democratic right to a secret ballot” (Allen Consulting Group 2011, p.2). The initiative was directly addressed in the 2010 Bill; it expressly required the “Electoral Commissioner to conduct an investigation as soon as possible into the feasibility of providing Internet voting for vision-impaired and other disabled persons for elections under this Act and, if such Internet voting is feasible, to propose a detailed model of such Internet voting for adoption” (Allen Consulting Group 2011, p.3). The system developed by the NSW Electoral Commission is called iVote, and received its first official reference in the Parliament during the Bill’s first reading in November 2010 (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.28114).

Using iVote to assist electors with disabilities was perceived as a superior alternative to then current arrangements involving Braille ballot papers. In 2007 Colin Barry advised that Braille
ballot papers were not a viable, long-term option for several reasons (NSW JSCEM 2007). Only one in nine visually impaired people can read Braille. Cost was also a consideration; as noted by Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads, Penny Sharpe, in her second reading speech on the 2010 Bill, “providing Braille ballot papers to the 52 electors who requested them for the 2008 local government elections cost $24,862, or $478 per vote” (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21928). In addition, the sheer size of the Braille ballot paper required for a Legislative Council election made it difficult for vision-impaired electors to cast a valid vote without assistance. A Braille ballot paper for the NSW Legislative Council was 67 pages in length (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21929).

Due to these reasons, the Bill received bipartisan support in the Parliament, with both Liberal government and Opposition Labor members supporting the Bill (Parliamentary Debates 2010, p.28110; 28113-4). In his speech introducing the Bill on behalf of the Premier, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, John Aquilina, explained that the Bill would enhance NSW’s democracy by allowing people with disabilities to vote in secret, a fundamental democratic right. Aquilina also explained how the Bill was developed following a wide consultation process involving the Parliament, the NSW government and the NSW Electoral Commission (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.28114).

In this barrier, it is clear that the Parliament, and indeed the electoral stakeholder network in NSW including the NSW Electoral Commission and advocacy groups, shared the common goal of assisting NSW electors with disabilities to vote in secret. This barrier is easily surpassed.

*Barrier Two – political tradition*

In this barrier there is evidence that the 2010 Bill acceded with a national, semi-coordinated effort by Australia’s electoral commissions to provide vision-impaired electors with a secret voting option. Discussion about the lack of a truly secret voting option for vision-impaired electors first arose around 2004. In its report on the 2004 federal election, the Commonwealth JSCEM said it was “particularly keen to see a form of electronic voting implemented that would allow the blind or visually impaired to cast a secret and independently verifiable vote” (JSCEM 2004, p.58). Accordingly, the Commonwealth JSCEM “recommended that a trial of an electronic voting system be implemented at an appropriate location in each electorate at the next federal election”. At the 2007 federal election, the AEC trialled electronic voting for
groups such as blind and low-vision voters. This evolved into the current method of telephone voting for this group of voters at the 2016 federal election. At the 2007 election, the AEC also trialled internet voting for Australian Defence Force personnel serving overseas. Since 2007 both the NSW Electoral Commission and the VEC have investigated internet voting.

To this end, using iVote to ensure that NSW met its obligations to low vision electors was mentioned in all nine of the second reading speeches. For example, in her second reading speech Lee Rhiannon, then also a Member of the NSW JSCEM, spoke about the importance of independence – a key element of the UN Charter – and NSW’s obligation to assist electors (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21933). This barrier is clearly surpassed.

Barrier Three – systemic balance and efficiency

As noted in barriers one and two, the Parliament and the NSW Electoral Commission had major concerns about the then voting options for electors with disabilities, including electors with low vision. Braille ballot papers were not an option and internet voting was identified as having considerable potential to assist electors to vote safely, conveniently and in private in their own home (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21933). There was political and institutional willpower to develop a secret voting option for NSW at the time of the 2010 Bill.

Barrier Four – actors’ vested interests

Despite the strong public policy foundations of the 2010 Bill, there was some debate about extending the iVote franchise to overseas and interstate electors. As noted earlier, the 2010 Bill passed with a provision for iVote to be used at NSW state elections for overseas and interstate electors – subject to the Electoral Commissioner’s discretion – but this provision required a regulatory change for enactment, which did not occur until 2012. So iVote was only available to the geographic cohort specified in the 2010 Bill at the 2015 NSW state election.

There was some apprehension in second reading speeches about extending the franchise to a larger cohort. John Aquilina explained that there was not an automatic right to iVote and that the 2010 Bill had been drafted with a view to ensuring the Electoral Commissioner had final say over who used the system (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21929). Of the nine other second reading speeches, four discussed this provision and referred to iVote’s staged
introduction as a sound policy initiative, mostly because of concerns that the system might be used by people who could otherwise vote on Election Day (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21933). Nevertheless, the 2010 Bill passed unamended.

 Barrier Five – parliamentary oversight of electoral administration

The introduction of iVote in the 2010 Bill followed an investigation into the feasibility of technology-assisted voting by the Electoral Commissioner, recommended in the report on the 2007 NSW state election by the NSW JSCEM. The JSCEM report served a very important function, giving imprimatur to the NSW Electoral Commission to further investigate internet voting and how it might help electors with disabilities to cast a secret vote. To understand why this is important, and the JSCEM’s important role in relation to the 2010 Bill, we also need to understand the context around electronic voting as a form of early voting in Australia in the 2000s.

By the time of the 2010 Bill there had been two major trials of electronic voting at Australian elections. Outside the ACT, which pioneered non-remote kiosk voting in Australia, the VEC first trialled electronic voting at the 2006 Victorian state election. It offered non-remote kiosk voting, known as vVote, at six centres across Victoria for electors with low vision and / or motor impairments. While the trial was not well patronised – the VEC took less than 100 votes on the kiosks – the VEC considered the trial successful and proposed further legislative amendments to extend the electronic voting franchise for the 2010 Victorian state election (VEC 2011, p.21). The VEC’s trial was closely followed by two AEC trials of electronic voting; one involving non-remote kiosks, the other remotely equipped and offered to the Australian Defence Force. For the non-remote trial, the Electoral and Referendum Legislation Amendment Act 2007 (Cwth) established the framework for the trials, with the details prescribed by regulations. The AEC took 850 votes nationally with an average national unit cost per vote of $2,597. In Victoria, where the same polling places were used as at the trials conducted for the state election in 2006, there was a 41 percent increase in elector turnout. The Australian Electoral Commissioner advised the Committee that feedback for the trial had been “quite positive” (JSCEM 2009, p.30). Further, the remote trial involved the Defence Force’s secure internet server. Despite reports of issues with technology due to slow server speeds, over 300 personnel cast their vote, but at a cost of over $7,000 per vote (JSCEM 2009).
It is important to note that there was never complete political support for these trials. At the time there were considerable concerns about the safety and security of electronic voting. These views are captured by Australia’s three parliamentary electoral matters committees. Despite the AEC’s insistence that the two trials above were successful the Commonwealth JSCEM, with a newly minted Labor Chair for the first time in nearly 15 years, did not support further electronic voting trials at future elections, citing concerns about security, cost and accessibility. Following the 2006 trial in 2007 the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee also only committed to examining electronic voting further at future Victorian elections, citing concerns about security and voter verifiability; it offered similar findings as part of four inquiries (and twice declined the VEC’s recommendation on two occasions to trial electronic voting at local government elections) before finally receiving a reference in 2015, where it has finally committed to deciding whether Victoria should expand electronic kiosk voting or adopt remote voting (Parliament of Victoria 2015). To this end, it should be noted that the VEC was, at the time, rather ‘lukewarm’ about remote electronic voting. While it saw great potential for kiosk voting despite the low take up at Victorian state elections (less than 2,000 electors with disabilities have cast a vote using kiosk voting at three Victorian state elections since 2006), at the time of the 2010 NSW Bill, it did not support remote voting due to security concerns (VEC 2015).38

In contrast, disability advocacy groups have long supported electronic kiosk voting and remote voting. Vision Australia has been a notably strong advocate for electronic voting options, appearing or giving evidence to each of the three parliamentary electoral matters committees in this thesis since the debate first emerged in the mid-2000s. Vision Australia’s position is one of access and has generally evolved over the years; it accepts that kiosk voting, such as vVote in Victoria, provides low vision electors with a secret ballot but has regularly criticised electoral commissions for failing to make the kiosks available in accessible voting centres (Vision Australia 2016, p.3). To this end the organisation has advocated for remote voting as an acceptable solution to kiosk voting, which is not well patronised, particularly in Victoria.

The NSW JSCEM acted as a clearinghouse for this debate. During the JSCEM’s inquiry into the 2007 NSW state election the committee received some powerful testimony from a vision-impaired elector as part of a roundtable session scheduled with disability advocacy groups.

38 The VEC has changed its position recently and supports iVote and Victoria adopting a remote voting option. See; Parliament of Victoria 2017.
One elector, Darren Fitler, who participated in the 2007 federal election electronic voting trial, told the committee that “there [was] nothing more liberating or that made me feel so much more a part of our entire democratic process than that day when I was able to do it all on my own. It was a very special moment” (NSW JSCEM 2008, p.38). The powerful nature of this evidence was noted in the Parliament; Don Harwin said it was one of the more moving things he had witnessed in his long parliamentary career (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21927). By airing the evidence the JSCEM also shifted the agenda away from cost and turnout to the normative benefits of electronic voting for electoral participation for those with disabilities; this accords with Reader’s (2014, p.514) finding, as we shall see in Chapter Nine, that this type on committee influence, of empowerment, of providing constituents a chance to speak to parliamentarians directly about policy, was one of the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee’s key functions.

The NSW JSCEM also performed one, further important role; it allowed the NSW Electoral Commissioner to build a case for remote versus kiosk voting, the key driver of iVote and the 2010 Bill. One of the main precursors to the Electoral Commission’s advisory report on electronic voting was that the NSW Electoral Commissioner, and in particular Barry, had concerns about the relative benefits of providing kiosk electronic voting at NSW state elections. From the NSW JSCEM public hearings, we know that while Barry was committed to providing opportunities for low vision electors he also had reservations about the costs and practicalities of kiosk voting based on the results of the disability roundtable scheduled by the NSW JSCEM (NSW JSCEM 2008, p.38). He suggested that NSW was better off investing in remote voting given Victoria’s experience in 2006 with kiosk voting. In this vein, the JSCEM allowed expert opinion – Barry’s and the disability services sector – to coalesce into a practical policy outcome; Russell and Benton (2011, p.83) call this “elite consensus influence”. That NSW is the only Australian jurisdiction, and one of the few in the world with remote voting, speaks to the intensity of this effect. As does interview data: Gareth Ward, then Chair of the NSW JSCEM, said that the “…”[JSCEM] [has been] critical in helping iVote get off the ground, if not essential” (Ward 2014, p.5).

In summary, the NSW JSCEM played several, important roles in relation to the 2010 Bill and iVote’s adoption in NSW. Without it, the Parliament would not have heard directly from disability advocacy organisations about how technology could enable secret voting for
electors with low vision. It also gave the NSW Electoral Commission another forum to push for remote voting over kiosk voting.

**Barrier Six – role of electoral commission**

It is no exaggeration to say that the NSW Electoral Commission is integrally linked to iVote, and that iVote is dependent on the NSW Electoral Commission’s strategic vision and advocacy. This is due to two main reasons.

Firstly, the NSW Electoral Commission advocated strongly for remote voting. Although barrier five presages this discussion, there are further issues to consider. As seen in Reform One regarding the 2006 Bill, Barry participated in NSW’s modernisation of its electoral legislation, making submissions to the Cabinet Office on proposed minor and technical reforms, liaising with then Liberal Opposition and giving evidence to the newly formed NSW JSCEM in 2004. These interventions placed reform on the NSW government’s agenda and established that Barry was interested in modernising NSW’s electoral legislation, as he helped Victoria do in the early 2000s, as analysed in Chapter Nine. This interventionist approach continued throughout Barry’s tenure (he retired in 2016), and to remote voting. Following on from the NSW JSCEM’s 2007 recommendation for the NSW Electoral Commission to prepare a feasibility report on iVote, the NSW Electoral Commissioner “canvassed organisations representing people who are vision-impaired or have other disabilities” (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21929-21930). Importantly, as noted in Parliamentary Debates (2010, p.21929), the Electoral Commissioner's “investigation initially had concentrated on using personal computers connected to the internet for iVote. An important message from the blind and vision-impaired community is that members strongly prefer a telephone-based system to register their secret ballot. This led to a broadening of the design of the iVote system during the feasibility study” (Parliamentary Debates NSW 2010, p.21929). In other words, the NSW Electoral Commission’s research influenced how the iVote was adopted, right down to the technology.

Further, it is clear that Colin Barry, the then Electoral Commissioner, was central to the 2010 Bill and the remote voting program. He was held in high regard by the NSW government and the Cabinet. Opposition Leader Barry O’Farrell also praised his working style, leadership and insight into the reform process: the 2006 Bill and the 2010 Bill debates contain six separate references to Barry’s “leadership” and capacity to engage stakeholders in the disability sector.
Barry’s central role in the 2010 Bill and iVote generally was also a theme in the interview data. Of the five interviewees connected with NSW, four mentioned Barry’s role in the iVote. In particular, Gareth Ward, then Chair of JSCEM, discussed Barry’s leadership style and how this had contributed to iVote’s eventual acceptance by the NSW government in the 2010 Bill:

[Barry]…is quite an excellent administrator and certainly an innovator…iVote is a world first and without Barry I doubt it would have gone ahead (Ward 2014, p.3).

In fact, eight of the 20 interviewees associated Barry with innovation. This is an intriguing finding. It suggests that the NSW Electoral Commissioner, not just the organisation itself, adopted a strategic, even creative, approach to providing an accessible voting service for NSW electors with low vision. Given that Australia’s electoral commissions are theoretically meant to be impartial, non-policy aligned and completely independent in the execution of their major duties – as noted in Chapter Three and by several interviewees (Tham 2013, p.11; VEC 2015, p.v; Gately 2014, p.2; Williams 2014, p.2) – the evidence in this barrier highlights a potential challenge to this orthodoxy. As explained by Tham (2013, p.11), electoral commissions straddle a fine line between implementing legislation as determined by Parliaments and creating rules themselves based on their knowledge of minor and technical issues in electoral administration. In this instance, Barry’s role in relation to iVote creates a type of uncertainty; would the NSW government have moved so aggressively on iVote without his support? Would another electoral commissioner have pushed remote voting as hard? As we shall see in Chapter Nine, Barry also displayed similar, executive-style tactics in Victoria.39

Lastly, the 2010 Bill gave the NSW Electoral Commission considerable, if not unprecedented, rulemaking power in relation to iVote. Under s120A of the 2010 Bill the Electoral Commissioner was given wide-ranging powers to determine not only electoral procedures relating to iVote, but also the class of elector who was entitled to use the system.

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39 There is also evidence that the NSW Electoral Commission vis-à-vis iVote created a leadership culture whereby iVote was pushed as a ‘product’ to become the preeminent remote voting solution in Australia. A good example of this is the role of the former ICT Director at the NSW Electoral Commission, Ian Brightwell. Brightwell was one of the chief architects of iVote and regularly engaged during his tenure in public speaking commitments spruiking iVote and its potential benefits. This occurred despite significant security concerns about iVote following its first implementation at the 2011 NSW state election, where a test ‘hack’ by computer scientists at the University of Melbourne exposed a vulnerability in the system which may have potentially compromised some votes. Subsequently Brightwell engaged in a long-running public argument with these academics (NSW Electoral Commission 2015) – the point here that this is a rare, and in my knowledge of Australian electoral administration unusual, example of a senior electoral official engaging in public policy comment in order to defend an electoral reform.
In other words, the NSW Electoral Commission could determine who would use iVote. This is a substantial clause. While most Australian electoral commissions, such as the VEC, determine electoral rules relating to finite aspects of the electoral process, such as the hours voting centres open (as we shall see in Chapter Nine in the VEC’s case) the 2010 Bill provides for the NSW Electoral Commission to determine the “classes” of elector able to use the system. As noted by Tham (2013, p.p.7-9), rule-making is one of the newer functions of Australia’s electoral commissions. This barrier documents perhaps the most ‘extreme’ example of it in relation to the development of Australia’s early voting laws from 2002 to 2015.

Reform Two: Conclusions

The 2010 Bill ushered in a rare phenomenon in Australian and international electoral administration; one of the world’s only subnational remote (early) voting systems. In 2015 over 280,000 NSW electors cast their vote using iVote under the revamped regulatory conditions approved in 2012, thereby seeing iVote overtake Estonia as the world’s largest remote voting platform.

In this reform the six barriers to the 2010 Bill’s passage through Parliament were surpassed easily. There was considerable goodwill in the Parliament and amongst other electoral stakeholders, including the NSW Electoral Commission, to assist electors with disabilities to cast a secret ballot. Despite some partisan concern about ramifications of remote voting for future NSW state elections, the 2010 Bill passed unamended. Given the levels of apprehension around Australia and internationally about remote voting, this is a notable legislative achievement. Barriers five and six demonstrated how the NSW Electoral Commission built a case for remote voting versus kiosk voting via the NSW JSCEM. The JSCEM aired debates for and against electronic voting, giving the committee the opportunity to receive valuable, expert evidence from Barry about the relative cost-effectiveness of remote voting over kiosk voting and the likelihood that remote voting would empower more electors with disabilities to vote. Minor and technical reform was thus heavily influenced by Barriers five and six in this case, further justifying the modifications to the assessment framework in this thesis.
Chapter conclusions

This chapter assessed the drivers of two similar, yet functionally different, early voting reforms to the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (NSW). Within the space of four years, these two amendments to NSW’s electoral legislation removed the dual declaration previously required for early voting at NSW state elections, and introduced one of the world’s few remote electronic voting for a limited cohort of NSW electors. Following these amendments, as we shall see in Chapter Eight, early voting at NSW state elections skyrocketed, and electronic voting grew 505 percent between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections. Over 250,000 electors who were supposedly not in NSW on Election Day also cast their ballot using iVote in 2015, dwarfing previous interstate and overseas voting figures for NSW state elections.
The superiority of the status quo was not a barrier to either minor electoral reform. One major contrast between the 2006 and 2010 Bills was that while there was considerable political will to reform NSW’s electoral legislation, it remains unclear whether the lack of partisan interest in the early voting reforms, particularly removing the dual declaration for early voting, was subsumed by the loftier goal of overhauling NSW’s electoral administration. As noted, in relation to the 2006 Bill NSW Hansard and interview evidence suggests that the Opposition Coalition actually supported easing access to early voting, whereas some Labor government Members had reservations about allowing more NSW electors to vote before Election Day. This finding contrasts with findings in Chapter Five and Nine. Yet findings from barrier four for the 2010 reform suggest that making early voting available electronically to vision-impaired electors, and potentially to interstate and overseas electors, was politically palatable.

As detailed in Chapter Five, the parliamentary electoral matters committee played an important role in promulgating minor reforms to early voting. In this case, the NSW JSCEM helped an ‘expert’, ABC Election Analyst Antony Green, air opinion about the cumbersome dual declaration governing early voting in NSW prior to 2006. Green’s opinion arguably would have languished in the Sydney Morning Herald had it not been for JSCEM; or, via JSCEM, Colin Barry, the Electoral Commissioner’s support for early voting as expressed at the JSCEM’s 2007 public hearings. Similarly, without JSCEM, it is debateable whether NSW would have implemented remote electronic voting. While there was political will to provide vision-impaired electors with a secret vote, the JSCEM provided an opportunity for members of the public to participate in policy debate. This example speaks to the important – and hitherto under-researched role – that Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees play in arbitrating electoral law making in Australia, and certainly, their role in stimulating demand for early voting.

In contrast to Chapter Five’s findings about the AEC, the NSW Electoral Commission, and Colin Barry, then NSW Electoral Commissioner, played a pivotal role in the adoption of NSW’s early voting reforms in 2006 and 2010. While the Commission did not formally propose repealing the dual declaration and easing access to early voting – Antony Green did – the Commission and Colin Barry, in his experience helping Victoria reform its electoral legislation prior to his tenure in NSW, must have known that removing two administrative hurdles to voting would stimulate demand for the service. A similar observation applies to Barry’s strong advocacy for remote voting in favour of kiosk voting on the basis of cost and
access in relation to the 2010 Bill. In both examples the NSW Electoral Commission, and Barry, stretched the purview of the NSW Electoral Commission from that of an electoral administration narrowly defined to one providing advice about stimulating electoral participation. Bending the rules in this away is a clear departure from the traditional Australian model of the independent electoral administration theorised by Brent (2008) and to a lesser extent Kelly (2008; 2012). Tham’s (2013, p.6) conceptualisation of electoral commissions as deliberative rule makers was, in these minor reforms to early voting, actually something different; the NSW Electoral Commission came to set the rules for early voting and remote voting. Referencing Hughes (2003), it is difficult to say that this behaviour is entirely consistent with how most Australian electoral commissions have performed their role.

These findings raise an affiliated question. Given the intensity of the NSW Electoral Commission’s support for iVote – and the clarity of the policy reason for introducing electronic voting in NSW as a means to enfranchise vision-impaired electors – has iVote appealed to its target audience? Have people less likely to vote due to physical impairment been stimulated by iVote and voted online, or has the system simply aided convenience voting by electors already disposed to early voting? These questions are addressed in Chapter Eight.
Chapter Eight: Early voting at NSW state elections 2007-2015, and iVote at the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections; quantitative analysis

Chapter Seven reviewed two reforms to NSW’s electoral legislation relating to early voting practice, including the introduction of remote voting at the 2011 NSW state election. This chapter presents results from the voter turnout models for the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections in response to the thesis’ second research question about the impact of early voting on voter turnout at NSW state elections. One difference between this chapter and Chapters Six and Ten is that it also applies the turnout models to assess another mode of early voting; iVote at the 2015 NSW state election. Given that the iVote cohort was expanded in 2012 to allow electors outside NSW to access iVote at the 2015 NSW state election, this analysis extends the thesis’ second research question by using aggregate data to assess the policy aim of the NSW government’s iVote system to assist electors with vision impairment and other disabilities to vote. This empirical analysis of iVote is one of the first in Australian electoral studies.

The chapter finds that while early voting was negatively associated with the Resources model, iVote was strongly positively associated with employment and tertiary education at the 2015 NSW state election. This supports established findings in the electronic voting literature suggesting that electronic voting systems appeal to voter with more resources, such as education. Supporting findings in Chapter Six, the chapter also demonstrates a strong association between early voting and partisanship at the early vote centre count.

As for Chapter Six and Ten, this chapter begins by reviewing descriptive statistics for the dependant variable – the rate of early voting in person at the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections, and then descriptive statistics for iVote at the 2015 NSW state election. After reviewing descriptive statistics for the independent variables in the four turnout models, the chapter then regresses early voting at the three NSW state elections against the four models of voter turnout developed in Chapter Three. It then describes the iVote data and analysis, and regresses iVote turnout in 2015 against the same four turnout models. The chapter concludes with analysis and conclusions from the turnout models, and mixed-methods conclusions.
Early voting in NSW – in numbers

Early voting in person

General elections

Compared to federal and Victorian state elections, there has been a more recent acceleration in the growth of early voting at NSW state elections. As seen in Figure 8.1, early voting increased noticeably at the 2007 NSW state election – just after the introduction of the oral declaration in the 2006 Bill – from 3.5 percent of total votes at the 2003 NSW state election to 5.5 percent at the 2007 NSW state election. Between the 2007 and 2015 NSW state elections, early voting increased 220 percent, and 82 percent between 2011 and 2015.

![Figure 8.1: Early voting by type at NSW state elections, 2003-2015](image)


Further, NSW has seen a steady decline in rates of ordinary voting relative to federal elections and Victorian state elections, owing to the introduction of iVote in 2011 and declining rates of postal voting. Overall, the percentage of voters using an early voting method, such as iVote, postal, early and declared institution voting, increased from 15.3 percent in 2011 (or 352,741 early votes) to 25.1 percent (or 663,000 early votes) in 2015. Early voting and iVote experienced the largest change (up by 82 percent and 505 percent respectively). As shown in Figure 8.2, ordinary voting (voting on the day of the election at a polling place) has declined progressively since the 1995 NSW state election, from 74.3 percent of votes in 2011 to 67.4 percent of votes in 2015. As seen in Figure 8.1, postal voting also decreased slightly between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections.
Referring to table 8.1, the top 10 Districts for early voting at the 2015 NSW state election have a rural / regional profile. With the exception of Cabramatta, which is located in western Sydney and has a strong and established Vietnamese community – according to the 2011 ABS Census 37 percent of people in Cabramatta District were born in Vietnam (ABS 2011, p.1) – nine of the ten Districts at the 2015 had a population density of less than 100 persons per square kilometre, as defined by the ABS Community Profile for each District. A good way to further contextualise this is that the ten Districts with the highest increases in usage of early voting methods between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections were: Shellharbour (16.1 percent), Lismore (15.4 percent), Fairfield (14.8 percent), Dubbo (13.5 percent), Northern Tablelands (12.8 percent), Riverstone (12.8 percent), Ballina (12.7 percent), Kiama (12.5 percent), Barwon (11.8 percent) and Bega (11.9 percent) (NSW Electoral Commission 2015, p.111).
Table 8.1: Top 10 Legislative Assembly Districts, early voting, 2015 NSW state election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Early voting</th>
<th>Postal voting</th>
<th>iVote</th>
<th>Ordinary voting</th>
<th>Total turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>15,703</td>
<td>1,228</td>
<td>1,728</td>
<td>29,505</td>
<td>48,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamworth</td>
<td>14,531</td>
<td>1,284</td>
<td>1,998</td>
<td>32,354</td>
<td>50,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathurst</td>
<td>14,387</td>
<td>1,016</td>
<td>1,807</td>
<td>32,749</td>
<td>49,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Tablelands</td>
<td>14,077</td>
<td>1,933</td>
<td>2,577</td>
<td>30,843</td>
<td>49,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>12,769</td>
<td>1,971</td>
<td>2,002</td>
<td>30,512</td>
<td>47,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellharbour</td>
<td>12,765</td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>2,329</td>
<td>36,662</td>
<td>53,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myall Lakes</td>
<td>12,622</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>1,694</td>
<td>33,579</td>
<td>49,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>11,802</td>
<td>1,662</td>
<td>2,178</td>
<td>32,520</td>
<td>48,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabramatta</td>
<td>11,791</td>
<td>1,795</td>
<td>3,772</td>
<td>32,583</td>
<td>49,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>11,731</td>
<td>1,721</td>
<td>2,578</td>
<td>32,084</td>
<td>48,114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


By-elections

Referring to Figure 8.3, the data from NSW state by-elections demonstrate a relatively clear, upward trend in early voting. This trend is comparable to that in Chapter Ten for Victorian state by-elections, although the increase in early voting moderated somewhat at the October 2012 Sydney District by-election and the 2013 Miranda District by-election. There are several explanations for this. The first is the influence of iVote; as seen in Chapter Seven, iVote’s eligible voting cohort was expanded in 2012 to permit voters outside NSW to use the system to vote. It is possible that the iVote ‘quota’ in the Clarence, Heffron and Sydney by-elections contained people who claimed to be outside NSW on Election Day but were actually electors who probably would have voted early in person in the absence of a remote voting option. Another is election-specific factors; both by-elections were triggered mid-term by unusual events – in 2012, Sydney was triggered by Clover Moore’s election to the City of Sydney council, which required her resignation from Parliament. In 2013 Miranda was triggered by a mid-term resignation and won by Labor’s Barry Collier with a 26-point two-party swing, the largest in NSW electoral history (NSW Electoral Commission 2013).
iVote

Accurately assessing iVote usage requires assessment of several different factors. In numerical terms, iVote increased 505 percent between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections, from 48,375 votes to 283,000 votes. Expressed another way, in 2011 1.1 percent of total votes were iVotes; in 2015 this increased to 6.2 percent of total votes. 299,890 people registered for iVote for the 2015 NSW state election and 283,669 used the system to cast their vote (NSW Electoral Commission 2015). This means that 94.6 percent of people who registered used the iVote system to vote.

In contrast to early voting at the 2015 NSW state election, the top 10 iVote Districts are strongly urban / metropolitan Districts. As seen in table 8.2, the Districts listed feature some of NSW’s – and indeed, Australia’s – wealthiest state electoral Districts, including North Shore, Manly, Vaucluse and Castle Hill Districts. All these Districts are concentrated in or around Sydney’s metropolitan region toward its eastern coastline. Another useful distinction is that the rate of early voting in these Districts is approximately half that, on average, of the

top 10 Districts for early voting; when all 93 NSW Legislative Assembly Districts are assessed, the top 10 iVote Districts fall roughly in the middle of the 93.

Table 8.2: Top 10 Legislative Assembly Districts, iVote, 2015 NSW state election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Early voting</th>
<th>Postal voting</th>
<th>iVote</th>
<th>Ordinary voting</th>
<th>Total turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>3,607</td>
<td>1,341</td>
<td>6,665</td>
<td>32,182</td>
<td>43,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>2,630</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>5,671</td>
<td>37,699</td>
<td>47,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtown</td>
<td>4,626</td>
<td>1,463</td>
<td>5,476</td>
<td>35,011</td>
<td>46,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heffron</td>
<td>2,665</td>
<td>1,434</td>
<td>5,388</td>
<td>38,438</td>
<td>47,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmain</td>
<td>3,705</td>
<td>1,652</td>
<td>4,959</td>
<td>37,635</td>
<td>47,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willoughby</td>
<td>4,523</td>
<td>2,773</td>
<td>4,782</td>
<td>36,418</td>
<td>48,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaucluse</td>
<td>6,034</td>
<td>3,691</td>
<td>4,595</td>
<td>32,982</td>
<td>47,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manly</td>
<td>4,113</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>4,310</td>
<td>38,006</td>
<td>48,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coogee</td>
<td>6,734</td>
<td>2,704</td>
<td>4,221</td>
<td>33,780</td>
<td>47,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Hill</td>
<td>4,397</td>
<td>2,667</td>
<td>4,137</td>
<td>38,202</td>
<td>49,403</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 8.3 shows iVote’s constituent voting categories at the 2015 NSW state election. Only six percent of total iVotes were cast by electors with vision impairment and other disabilities. While this number may seem low given the 505 percent increase in iVote between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections, iVote has been taken significantly more votes from vision-impaired electors than other Australian electronic voting systems; Victoria’s vVote kiosk system only took 290 binding votes from vision-impaired electors at the 2014 Victorian state election (VEC 2015). It is also clear the regulatory amendment in 2012 to allow electors outside NSW to cast a ballot using iVote had a dramatic effect on iVote turnout. The ‘outside NSW’ elector category accounted for 91 percent of the total iVote turnout, or 257,000 votes. Put another way, 257,000 votes represents the combined enrolment of five NSW Legislative Assembly Districts.
Table 8.3: iVote, voting categories as cast, 2015 NSW state election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>iVote totals</th>
<th>Total percent</th>
<th>Internet/Call Centre iVote</th>
<th>Telephone vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blind/vision-impaired/linguistic</td>
<td>4,818</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,609</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other disabilities</td>
<td>12,714</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12,337</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20km from polling place</td>
<td>8,407</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8,270</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside NSW</td>
<td>257,730</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>255,357</td>
<td>2,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>283,669</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>280,573</td>
<td>3,096</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, there is more to this figure than meets the eye – and it may be related to early voting in person. It has to do with the iVote registration system. While it is indeed true that 94 percent of those who registered to iVote voted, it is possible that many of those who registered to use the system may have deliberately misapplied for an iVote during the registration process. One of the unique aspects of iVote is that the registration relies on the elector ‘self-reporting’ their entitlement. Under this process, the elector self-selects whichever criteria they fall into. By its own admission, the NSW Electoral Commission has said that there is a “good chance” a large number of the 257,730 outside NSW registered electors may have in fact been in NSW, or simply at home, when they cast their iVote (NSW Electoral Commission 2016). In a presentation to the Victorian Parliamentary Library in May 2016 Mark Radcliffe, iVote Manager, explained that there were ‘spikes’ in iVote registrations towards the end of the early voting period due to media coverage surrounding an event where a team of computer scientists (involving US and Australian-based academics) reportedly hacked into iVote, exposing the system as vulnerable to a man-in-the-middle Javascript attack (NSW Electoral Commission 2016). While discussing this attack is not relevant to this thesis’ research questions, it is notable that the Commission has publicly explained how the media coverage – it was reported widely on ABC Television and NSW print media (NSW Electoral Commission 2016) – drove a spike in iVote registrations; the Commission even encouraged people to iVote in its public defence of the system (NSW Electoral Commission 2016). It is not difficult to imagine many of the 257,000 outside NSW electors, sitting at home, in more affluent areas of Sydney, seeing the media reports and the Commission’s encouragement, and then logging on to cast their iVote. The most logical entitlement for them to claim was ‘outside NSW’.
Unfortunately we will never be able to verify these figures as only four percent of iVoters registered and then verified their identity at the 2015 NSW state election (NSW Electoral Commission 2016). Further, the NSW Electoral Commission did not disaggregate iVote data from postal voting data at the 2011 NSW state election for public access, making cross-election comparisons impossible. Nevertheless, of the extra 220,000 iVotes at the 2015 NSW state election compared to when the system was launched at the 2011 NSW state election, many were probably electors who were, in fact, utilising remote voting technology to cast an early vote in person ‘remotely’. This provides strong leads as to the relationship between socio-economic resources and iVote, which the thesis explores with multivariate analysis.

Descriptive statistics – dependent variable

Early voting and iVote

Table 8.4 lists the descriptive statistics for the rate of early voting at the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections. The data is mostly normally distributed. Further, the mean doubled between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections. This demonstrates the magnitude of the growth in early voting at NSW state elections after the 2006 Bill reforms removing the dual declaration for early voting. In table 8.5, the iVote dependent variable data is also mostly normally distributed, with a slight positive skewness.

| Table 8.4: Descriptive statistics, early voting, NSW state elections, 2007-2015 |
|---------------------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **2007 NSW state election**    | N        | Minimum         | Maximum  | Mean             | Standard         | Skewness (standard error in brackets) |
| Early voting                   | 93       | 925.0           | 5399.0   | 2400.505         | 1032.24          | 0.912 (0.250)   |
| Valid N                        | 93       |                 |          |                 |                 |                               |
| **2011 NSW state election**    | N        | Minimum         | Maximum  | Mean             | Standard         | Skewness (standard error in brackets) |
| Early voting                   | 93       | 776.0           | 10977.0  | 3797.247         | 2297.46          | 0.999 (0.250)   |
| Valid N                        | 93       |                 |          |                 |                 |                               |
| **2015 NSW state election**    | N        | Minimum         | Maximum  | Mean             | Standard         | Skewness (standard error in brackets) |
| Early voting                   | 93       | 2611.0          | 15703.0  | 7033.11          | 3250.374         | 0.733 (0.250)   |
| Valid N                        | 93       |                 |          |                 |                 |                               |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early voting</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1136.0</td>
<td>6665.0</td>
<td>3040.34</td>
<td>986.854</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Descriptive statistics – independent variables

Tables 8.6 to 8.8 list descriptive statistics for the independent variables in this chapter. Like the dependent variable there is general uniformity in the statistics. Most of the socio-economic and socio-cultural variables display a slight positive skewness, with the consistent patterns across the three NSW elections. The only variable which consistently falls outside of skewness parameters is the different address one-year prior to the relevant Census in the 2011 and 2015 NSW state election cycles. While the data for this variable are positively skewed in all three election cycles; 2007, 0.609, 2011, 2.798 and 2015, 2.963, the increase between the 2007 and 2011/2015 NSW state elections warrants some attention. While it would be tempting to suggest the skewness of this data relates to one or two particular outliers in the dataset, i.e. that there are a small number of Districts with high levels of population mobility in NSW, it is more accurate to say that this skewness could be related to the well-known country/city divide in NSW politics (Hawker Britton 2004, p.3). Following the 2004 NSW electoral redistribution – NSW is required to hold a redistribution every two state elections – there was a large increase in NSW’s population growth of about seven percent between 2005 and 2012. Labor-aligned lobby firm Hawker Britton’s report on the 2004 redistribution noted that there was a contraction from 2004 to 2010 in electorates in the Hunter and Central Coast regions as NSW’s population moved closer to Sydney’s coastal areas (Hawker Britton 2004, p.3). This suggests greater mobility in later NSW elections, therefore explaining the positive skewness.
### Table 8.6: 2007 NSW state election Legislative Assembly Districts / 2006 ABS Census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>21743</td>
<td>49171</td>
<td>31246.28</td>
<td>4794.672</td>
<td>.578 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5206</td>
<td>37964</td>
<td>13431.10</td>
<td>7097.337</td>
<td>1.288 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3160</td>
<td>42166</td>
<td>16700.67</td>
<td>10781.362</td>
<td>.558 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address 1-year prior to Census</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5599</td>
<td>15444</td>
<td>9759.92</td>
<td>2031.198</td>
<td>.609 (0.264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>7221.71</td>
<td>1348.6335</td>
<td>1574.97413</td>
<td>1.259 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>24.280</td>
<td>13.9068</td>
<td>.486 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>40.516</td>
<td>11.9096</td>
<td>-.302 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP early voting centre</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2173.0</td>
<td>576.849</td>
<td>443.0789</td>
<td>.916 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>1.3961</td>
<td>.014 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>44151.0</td>
<td>50053.0</td>
<td>47032.570</td>
<td>1105.9915</td>
<td>.055 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>84.10</td>
<td>95.92</td>
<td>92.6530</td>
<td>1.72396</td>
<td>-1.805 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal rate</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>2.7681</td>
<td>.87759</td>
<td>.703 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of EVC per District</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.548</td>
<td>.8662</td>
<td>1.540 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise): 93

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, 2006 Census (all 93 NSW Legislative Assembly Districts), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, August 2015; NSW Electoral Commission, “Correspondence; Linda Franklin, Director”, 7 October 2014.

### Table 8.7: 2011 NSW state election Legislative Assembly Districts / 2011 ABS Census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>23210</td>
<td>61139</td>
<td>33705.85</td>
<td>5867.201</td>
<td>1.323 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6846</td>
<td>51072</td>
<td>16685.29</td>
<td>8722.358</td>
<td>1.304 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3346</td>
<td>49573</td>
<td>19057.77</td>
<td>12684.172</td>
<td>.595 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>7616.4</td>
<td>1438.077</td>
<td>1679.3189</td>
<td>1.237 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address 1-year prior to Census</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6250</td>
<td>26608</td>
<td>10088.66</td>
<td>2761.258</td>
<td>2.798 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>74.00</td>
<td>31.0234</td>
<td>22.43119</td>
<td>.229 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>74.33</td>
<td>42.8713</td>
<td>13.97225</td>
<td>-.161 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP early voting centre</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4791.0</td>
<td>1283.290</td>
<td>1217.6488</td>
<td>1.192 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.355</td>
<td>1.3241</td>
<td>.953 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>43814</td>
<td>57408</td>
<td>49847.42</td>
<td>1850.899</td>
<td>.750 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>83.93</td>
<td>95.07</td>
<td>92.5660</td>
<td>1.96462</td>
<td>-1.694 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal rate</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>3.1952</td>
<td>1.06991</td>
<td>1.026 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of EVC per District</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.688</td>
<td>.9778</td>
<td>1.594 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise): 93

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, 2006 Census (all 93 NSW Legislative Assembly Districts), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, August 2015; NSW Electoral Commission, “Correspondence; Linda Franklin, Director”, 7 October 2014.

### Table 8.8: 2015 NSW state election Legislative Assembly Districts / 2011 ABS Census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>21825</td>
<td>49714</td>
<td>33705.89</td>
<td>4851.985</td>
<td>.151 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6535</td>
<td>41550</td>
<td>16865.30</td>
<td>8268.148</td>
<td>.976 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3627</td>
<td>46980</td>
<td>19058.16</td>
<td>12317.419</td>
<td>.526 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>6990.5</td>
<td>1345.370</td>
<td>1603.4987</td>
<td>1.354 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address 1-year prior to Census</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6690</td>
<td>26608</td>
<td>10195.90</td>
<td>2745.159</td>
<td>2.963 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>58.80</td>
<td>27.19</td>
<td>15.46</td>
<td>.183 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>4.546</td>
<td>64.010</td>
<td>40.86974</td>
<td>12.602746</td>
<td>-.811 (0.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP early voting centre</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>7916.0</td>
<td>1787.319</td>
<td>1432.1676</td>
<td>1.601 (0.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.791</td>
<td>.9489</td>
<td>.912 (0.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>52137</td>
<td>58190</td>
<td>54200.67</td>
<td>1143.532</td>
<td>.938 (0.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>82.46</td>
<td>94.24</td>
<td>90.48</td>
<td>907.215</td>
<td>.892 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal rate</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.960</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.44269</td>
<td>.947207</td>
<td>.703 (0.250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of EVC per District</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.582</td>
<td>1.2567</td>
<td>1.801 (0.253)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise): 93

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, 2006 Census (all 93 NSW Legislative Assembly Districts), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, August 2015; NSW Electoral Commission, “Correspondence; Linda Franklin, Director”, 7 October 2014.
Data treatment and results

As in Chapters Six and Ten, OLS regressions are used to estimate District-level associations between early voting at the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary education in the Resources model of voter turnout. The results of the multivariate analysis are presented per model in tables 8.10 to 8.13. The dependent variable is the raw number of early votes in each of the 93 NSW Legislative Assembly Districts for the 2007, 2011 and 2015 federal elections. These data are regressed by each of four turnout models developed in Chapter Three.

This chapter also estimates District-level associations between iVote and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary education in the Resources model of voter turnout. The results of the multivariate analysis are presented per model in tables 8.14 to 8.17. The dependent variable is the raw number of iVotes in each of the 93 NSW Legislative Assembly Districts for the 2015 NSW state election. As noted in Chapter Three, the voter turnout literature focusing on electronic voting suggests that electronic voting systems, particularly remote voting systems, tend to be used more by people who have the resources to vote (Alvarez et al 2008). Research from Estonia, home to the world’s largest remote voting prior to iVote at the 2015 NSW state election (30 percent of votes at the 2015 Estonia parliamentary elections were cast over the internet), also demonstrates that the demographic profile of remote voting users is time sensitive. The Estonian National Electoral Committee found that the first three Estonian elections to have remote voting had a skewed user profile, with “e-voters…indeed clearly distinct, they were younger, with better computer skills and mostly ethnic Estonians [a measure of higher socio-economic status]. From the third election onwards however, these differences started to disappear, meaning that e-voters became progressively less distinct from regular paper voters” (Estonian National Electoral Committee 2016, p.167). Reviewing iVote’s descriptive statistics, we might expect to see a similar, positive relationship between iVote and the Resources model. As a mini-hypothesis, this is; that the 2012 regulatory changes allowing electors outside NSW to self-report their entitlement to iVote stimulated turnout by those already likely to vote.

Further, this chapter uses 13 independent variables, as shown in table 8.9. In contrast to Chapter Six, the NSW Electoral Commission was able to provide data about the number of early voting centres at the three NSW state elections in this thesis, so variable 13 is added. These results can be compared directly with Victoria in Chapter Ten.
Table 8.9: Variables, voter turnout models, 2007-2015 NSW state elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Variable measurement</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early voting in person</td>
<td>Raw number of early votes in person, as sourced from relevant NSW Electoral Commission’s results page.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iVote</td>
<td>Raw number of iVotes, from NSW Electoral Commission’s results page.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Independent variable

#### a) Resources model

1. **Employment**
   - Number of adult male and females employed in the District at the SED level, based on relevant Census.
   - Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).

2. **Tertiary qualifications**
   - Number of people who hold tertiary qualifications in the District at the SED level.
   - Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).

#### b) Social-Cultural model

3. **Born overseas**
   - Number of people born overseas in the District at the SED level, based on relevant Census.
   - Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).

4. **Level of one-year population stability**
   - Number of people who changed address one-year prior to the relevant Census in the District at the SED level.
   - Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).

5. **Population density**
   - Number of people per square kilometre in the District based on the relevant Census and SED data.
   - Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).

#### c) Political model

6. **Closeness between two-candidate (2CP) preferred candidates**
   - Two-candidate preferred count is a distribution of preferences to the two candidates who are expected to come first and second in the election. Usually, but not always, these will be the candidates representing the ALP and the Liberal or National Parties. Closeness is raw number of votes.
   - This service is provided by Australian electoral commissions as a courtesy to parties and candidates. It is usually given to media outlets for reports on results on Election Night.

7. **Closeness between first and third candidate**
   - The raw vote difference between the first candidate and third candidate in the 2CP count.
   - N/A

8. **Closeness between 2CP count, early voting centre counts.**
   - The raw vote difference between the two candidates in the 2CP counts conducted at early voting centres.
   - N/A

9. **Number of candidates standing for election in electoral District or Division**
   - The number of candidates standing for election.
   - N/A

#### d) Electoral / inst. model

10. **Enrolment**
    - Total number of enrolled people in each District. Data sourced from the NSW Electoral Commission’s results page.
    - N/A

11. **Turnout**
    - The total number of eligible electors who voted divided by the total number of eligible electors in District.
    - N/A

12. **Informal**
    - Informal votes are those which are not completed according to the parameters set out in electoral legislation. Total informal votes in District.
    - N/A

13. **No. of early voting centres**
    - The number of early voting centres per District as determined by the NSW Electoral Commission.
    - N/A

---

**Early voting**

**Resources model**

Referring to table 8.10, there is a negative relationship between socio-economic variables and early voting at NSW state elections over the three elections in this chapter, which increases in magnitude in 2011 and 2015. In 2007 socio-economic variables explained only nine percent of the variance in early voting at District level. In all three elections both employment and
tertiary education are negatively associated with early voting, although to differing degrees; in 2007 employment was negatively associated with early voting (Beta -0.295, p < .05), and also in 2011 (Beta -0.275, p < .05). Tertiary education is also negatively associated with early voting throughout the three-election cycle but this is not statistically significant in 2007 and 2011. In 2015 however, tertiary education is strongly negatively associated with early voting (Beta -0.500, p < .001), with the Resources model – and tertiary education in particular – accounting for 38 percent of the variance in early voting at the 2015 NSW state election. In 2015 then, we can say that for every one-unit increase in tertiary education in a NSW District, early voting decreased 0.500, or 194 votes based on the unstandardised coefficient.

**Social-Cultural model**

The Social-Cultural model is highly predictive of early voting across the three elections, explaining 38, 46 and 50 percent of the variance in early voting at the 2007, 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections respectively. Employment and tertiary education remain negatively associated with early voting; the main differences between this model and the Resources model are that in 2011, employment is strongly negatively associated with early voting in a statistically significant manner (Beta -0.541, p < .001) and in 2015, both employment (Beta -0.236, p < .05) and tertiary qualifications (Beta -0.413, p < .01) are negatively associated with early voting.

In the Social-Cultural model there are several consistent model effects. Early voting is negatively associated throughout the three-election cycle with the number of people born overseas in a NSW District, although this relationship is only statistically significant in 2007 (Beta -0.523, p < .001) and 2015 (Beta -0.405, p < .01). Similarly, the level of one-year address change in a NSW District is strongly positively associated across the three election cycle, with the standardised coefficient strongest in 2011 of 0.700 (p < .001). The negative relationship between born overseas, and positive relationship with one-year address change, is quite similar to the Social-Cultural model findings in Chapter Six for federal elections.

**Political model**

Referring to table 8.12, the Political model explains at least 57 percent of the variation in early voting (2011), and 74 percent at the 2015 NSW state election. This overall model fit contrasts significantly to results for the Political model in Chapter Six, where the $R^2$ declined between 2007 and 2013. When political variables are introduced, the socio-economic
variables of employment and tertiary education remain statistically significant in similar magnitudes to the Social-Cultural model. Coefficients for employment are statistically significant and negatively associated in 2007 (-0.299, p < .01) and 2011 (-0.295, p < .01). Tertiary qualifications also remains negatively associated with early voting in 2011 and 2015 (2015 - -0.227, p < .05). Social-Cultural variables, notably different address one-year prior to the Census, are positively associated with early voting in 2011 (0.526, p < .001).

As seen in the Political models in Chapter Six two political variables are highly predictive of early voting at NSW state elections. Closeness of the 2CP count is strongly negatively associated with early voting at the three elections, although it is noteworthy that the standardised coefficient in 2007 (-0.600, p < .001) is almost double that in 2015 (-0.380, p < .001), showing the effect decreased over time. In addition, closeness of the 2CP early vote centre count is strongly positively associated with early voting, with a standardised coefficient of 0.735 (p < .001) at the 2015 NSW state election. This inverse relationship between the closeness of the 2CP general and 2CP early vote centre count was also seen in Chapter Six – and in Chapter 10 – suggesting, at the aggregate-level, a consistent strong positive association between a larger gap between early voting at the 2CP early vote centre count, as opposed to a negative relationship at the 2CP count general count.

Electoral / Institutional model

Referring to table 8.12, in the Electoral / Institutional model employment and tertiary education remain statistically significant over the three elections, albeit with one major difference. Coefficients for tertiary education are strongly negatively associated with early voting in 2011 (Beta -0.735, p < .001) and 2015 (Beta -0.880, p < .001), indicating that tertiary education, a traditional ‘gold standard’ measure of higher electoral participation, is negatively associated with early voting in a model controlling for electoral / institutional variables. The interactive effect between the resources variables and electoral / institutional variables is related to informal voting; informal voting is strongly negatively associated with early voting at the 2011 (Beta -0.496, p < .001) and 2015 (Beta -0.551, p < .001) NSW state elections.
Table 8.10: Early voting at 2007-2015 NSW state elections regressed by Resources model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4621.273</td>
<td>884.174</td>
<td></td>
<td>8307.177</td>
<td>1553.954</td>
<td></td>
<td>13851.55</td>
<td>2526.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 – Employment</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>-0.295*</td>
<td>-0.101</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>-0.257*</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>-0.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>-0.070</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>-0.251</td>
<td>-0.194</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>-0.500***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted \( R^2 \), standard error in brackets

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Constant} & \quad 0.099 \quad (979.5926) \\
V1 – Employment & \quad 0.215 \quad (2035.3479) \\
V2 - Tertiary qualifications & \quad 0.378 \quad (2453.433) \\
\end{align*}
\]

Note: Significance measured at * \( p < .05 \), ** \( p < .01 \), *** \( p < .001 \).

Table 8.11: Early voting at 2007-2015 NSW state elections regressed by Social-Cultural model (incorporating Resources model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3865.273</td>
<td>884.174</td>
<td></td>
<td>6989.56</td>
<td>1318.706</td>
<td></td>
<td>13487.83</td>
<td>2405.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources model variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>-0.065</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.281**</td>
<td>-0.212</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>-0.541***</td>
<td>-0.159</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>-0.236*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>-0.070</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>-0.253</td>
<td>-0.160</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>-0.413**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-Cultural variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.523***</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-0.101</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>-0.405**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.224**</td>
<td>0.582</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.700***</td>
<td>0.336</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.289**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>-0.319</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>-0.233</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>0.353</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted \( R^2 \), standard error in brackets

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Constant} & \quad 0.387 \quad (808.28) \\
V1 – Employment & \quad 0.463 \quad (1683.46) \\
V2 - Tertiary qualifications & \quad 0.506 \quad (2266.40) \\
\end{align*}
\]

Note: Significance measured at * \( p < .05 \), ** \( p < .01 \), *** \( p < .001 \).
Table 8.12: Early voting at 2007-2015 NSW state elections regressed by Political model (incorporating Resources and Social-Cultural models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3900.859</td>
<td>946.777</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources model variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>-0.069</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.299**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-Cultural variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>-0.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political model variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 - Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>-43.20</td>
<td>9.650</td>
<td>-0.600***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 - Closeness 2CP 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>14.150</td>
<td>8.873</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 - Closeness 2CP early vote centre count</td>
<td>1.431</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>0.610***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 - No. of candidates</td>
<td>-43.13</td>
<td>63.602</td>
<td>-0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R², standard error in brackets</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>(673.03)</td>
<td>0.643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
### Table 8.13: Early voting at 2007-2015 NSW state elections regressed by Electoral/Institutional model (incorporating Resources, Social-Cultural and Political models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>7470.975</td>
<td>6964.23</td>
<td></td>
<td>-5591.84</td>
<td>10682.267</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 – Employment</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>-0.230*</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.194</td>
<td>0.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-cultural model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.147</td>
<td>0.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 - Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>-37.066</td>
<td>9.417</td>
<td>-0.515***</td>
<td></td>
<td>-24.575</td>
<td>14.949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 - Closeness 2CP 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>6.856</td>
<td>8.754</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td></td>
<td>-14.995</td>
<td>23.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 - Closeness 2CP early vote centre count</td>
<td>1.113</td>
<td>0.278</td>
<td>0.474***</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.062</td>
<td>0.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 - No. of candidates</td>
<td>-16.364</td>
<td>61.425</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td></td>
<td>-184.072</td>
<td>122.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral / Institutional model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10 - Enrolment</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11 – Turnout</td>
<td>-73.681</td>
<td>73.640</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td></td>
<td>75.359</td>
<td>108.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12 – Informal</td>
<td>-305.020</td>
<td>176.118</td>
<td>-0.266*</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1065.777</td>
<td>280.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V13 – No of EVC per District</td>
<td>247.444</td>
<td>103.126</td>
<td>0.210**</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.491</td>
<td>168.942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R², standard error in brackets</strong></td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>(623.24)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td>(1231.79)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.*
iVote

Resources model

Referring to table 8.13, in contrast to the Resources model above for early voting, socio-economic variables are strongly positively associated with iVote at the 2015 NSW state election. Coefficients for employment (Beta 0.265, p < .001) and tertiary education (Beta 0.665, p < .001) are statistically significant at the .001 level, and for the only time in this thesis, at the same time for an election. Notably, the $R^2$ is very significant, explaining 78 percent of the variance in iVote at the 2015 NSW state election; this is also the strongest model fit in the thesis. Overall, these findings support evidence in the electronic voting literature that the ‘convenience’ of online voting may appeal to those electors who are already mobilised to vote, certainly as this is a relatively new remote voting system (Alvarez and Nagler 2001; Norris 2001; Estonian National Electoral Committee 2016, p.168). Given that 91 percent of iVotes were cast by electors who were ‘outside NSW’, these findings support the discussion about iVote’s descriptive statistics.

Social-Cultural model

In table 8.15 socio-economic variables are positively associated with iVote in the Social-Cultural model. Further, at the 2015 NSW state election early voting was strongly positively associated with the number of people born overseas in a NSW District (0.303, p < .001) and also positively associated with one-year address change (0.164, p < .01); this is the only time born overseas is positively associated with an early voting method in this thesis. The interactive model effect therefore suggests that in contrast to early voting at the 2015 NSW state election, which saw a negative coefficient for born overseas and a positive coefficient for one-year address change, iVote was more likely to occur in Districts with higher levels of population mobility and demographic diversity. These characteristics fit several of the top 10 iVote Districts at the 2015 NSW state election.

Political model

In table 8.16, both socio-economic and social-cultural variables remain strongly statistically significant, although the employment and tertiary education standardised coefficients are smaller than in the previous two models (employment; Beta 0.236, p < .001; tertiary education; Beta 0.330, p < .001). Yet while coefficients for born overseas (Beta 0.256, p < .001) and one-year address change (Beta 0.231, p < .001) are also strongly positively related to iVote, the Political
model has a lower model fit compared to the Political model for early voting, explaining only an additional eight percent of the variance in iVote at the 2015 NSW state election.

However, in contrast to the Political model for early voting at the 2015 NSW state election, there is an inverse relationship between the two statistically significant variables; closeness of 2CP general count and closeness of the 2CP early vote centre count. Whereas early voting is positively associated with the 2CP early vote centre count, suggesting, at the aggregate-level, NSW Districts with high levels of early voting might have a greater gap between the 2CP at the early voting centre level, for iVote there is a negative relationship with this variable (Beta -0.133, p < .05) and a strong positive relationship with the 2CP general count (Beta 0.186, p < .001). This supports the idea that Districts with high levels of iVote usage saw lower 2CP gaps in early voting centre counts; in other words, iVote may have suppressed partisan early voting because some early voters used iVote instead of voting in person. Boschler (2010, p.19) demonstrated a similar effect with remote voting in Estonia at the 2007 Estonian elections.

Electoral / Institutional model

In table 8.17, socio-economic variables remain strongly positively associated with iVote, with tertiary education (0.359, p < .001) strongly positively associated at a greater magnitude than employment (0.265, p < .001). Social-Cultural and Political model variables also retain their previous relationships with iVote, suggesting a strong positive association between employment and tertiary education in a NSW District and iVote in 2015 even when controlling for social and political variables.

While electoral / institutional variables only explain a further seven percent of the variance in iVote, there are two notable relationships. iVote was negatively associated with turnout at the 2015 NSW state election (-0.129, p < .05) and positively associated with the number of early voting centres (0.092, p < .05). Due to a lack of data for federal elections and Victoria not using remote electronic voting, we are unable to compare this data to another jurisdiction. Although the standardised coefficient for the number of early voting centres is small, it establishes a relationship between iVote and the number of early voting centres established. If we did not have the low turnout coefficient to modulate this effect by, we might conclude that this supports iVoting in Districts with more early voting centres than the mean. But with the low turnout coefficient, it more likely suggests that iVote occurred in Districts with low turnout and above mean early voting centres, such as Sydney District. iVoters were probably thus aware of early voting in person but chose to vote via iVote.
### Table 8.14: iVote at 2015 NSW state election regressed by Resources model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-154.603</td>
<td>454.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R^2, standard error in brackets

0.781 (457.74)

*Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.*

### Table 8.15: iVote at 2015 NSW state election regressed by Social-Cultural model (incorporating Resources model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-154.603</td>
<td>454.745</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources model variables**

| V1 – Employment | 0.052 | 0.015 | 0.254*** |
| V2 - Tertiary qualifications | 0.051 | 0.010 | 0.429*** |

**Social-Cultural model variables**

| V3 – Born overseas | 0.024 | 0.007 | 0.303*** |
| V4 – Different address 1-year | 0.058 | 0.021 | 0.164** |
| V5 – Population density | -0.036 | 0.062 | -0.054 |

Adjusted R^2, standard error in brackets

0.836 (396.15)

*Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.*
Table 8.16: iVote at 2015 NSW state election regressed by Political model (incorporating Resources and Social-Cultural models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-251.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources model variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 – Employment</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-Cultural model variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 – Born overseas</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 – Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 – Population density</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political model variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 – Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>11.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 – Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>0.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 – Closeness 2CP early vote centre count</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 – No. of candidates</td>
<td>-70.781</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R², standard error in brackets: 0.850 (396.15)

Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
Table 8.17: iVote at 2015 NSW state election regressed by Electoral/Institutional model (incorporating Resources, Social-Cultural and Political models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>8865.40</td>
<td>3695.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources model variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 – Employment</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-Cultural model variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 – Born overseas</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 – Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 – Population density</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political model variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 – Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>13.747</td>
<td>5.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 – Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>-1.099</td>
<td>5.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 – Closeness 2CP early vote centre count</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 – No. of candidates</td>
<td>-77.184</td>
<td>50.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral / Institutional variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10 – Enrolment</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11 – Turnout</td>
<td>-56.962</td>
<td>28.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12 – Informal rate</td>
<td>-27.048</td>
<td>113.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V13 – No. of EVC in District</td>
<td>75.405</td>
<td>40.607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R², standard error in brackets</td>
<td>0.863 (362.608)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
Analysis and conclusions

Like federal and Victorian state elections, early voting at NSW state elections has increased since 2007, and increased 202 percent between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections. This is the largest bi-election increase of the three jurisdictions in this thesis. The trend to early voting was also unequivocally aided by the introduction of NSW’s remote voting system in 2011, and further expansion in 2012 to electors who were outside NSW on Election Day. With this amendment iVote increased 505 percent and the rate of postal voting experienced its sharpest decline at a NSW state election in over 15 years.

This chapter has addressed the thesis’ second research question about the impact of early voting on voter turnout at NSW state elections using data from two modes of early voting; early voting in person, and iVote. Firstly, the results from the early voting models strongly support the thesis’ hypothesis that electoral Districts or Divisions with lower socio-economic status are likely to have higher levels of early voting. Unlike federal elections, where the Resources model did not explain much of the variance in early voting and where employment and tertiary education was mostly positively associated with early voting, in this chapter socio-economic variables were consistently negatively associated with early voting. In particular, tertiary education, one of the traditional markers in the voter turnout literature of electoral participation, was consistently negatively associated with early voting at the three NSW state elections considered in this chapter. When controlling for social-cultural and political variables, these effects are the same. These findings support a conclusion that the 2006 Bill removing the dual declaration required for early voting, which took effect at the 2007 NSW state election, probably made it easier for people to vote and had the effect of stimulating early voting.

Notwithstanding these findings, results from the chapter’s second early voting mode, iVote, contradict the second research question’s hypothesis. In 2015 iVote was strongly positively associated with employment and tertiary education, with education having the greatest standardised coefficients of the two socio-economic variables. These effects were consistent when controlling for social-cultural, political and electoral / institutional variables. If, as Norris (2006, p.60) found, the rise of technology means that resources like remote voting “bring the polls closer to citizens”, iVote may have only brought voting closer to those with greater socio-economic resources. Bochsler (2010, p.3) offered similar findings about the introduction of remote voting at the 2007 Estonian elections; prior to iVote’s implementation
at the 2015 NSW state election Estonia was the world’s largest remote voting platform. Bochsler found that internet voting only “substituted existing votes at the polls” and appealed to “politically established groups”, or in other words, electors with the means and resources to vote. These findings also bolster the Estonian National Electoral Committee’s (2016, p.167) findings about the demographic correlates of remote voting in Estonia.

Yet Bochsler also found that internet voting had the benefit of drawing in some voters who might otherwise not be able to vote, such as those living far from a polling place. In a similar way, we should not completely downplay the participatory aspects of iVote. Compared to Australia’s other electronic voting systems, such as Victoria’s vVote system, iVote has thus far helped thousands of electors with vision impairment and other disabilities to cast a secret vote at NSW state elections. Given that the system, as outlined in Chapter Seven, was ostensibly designed in response to parliamentary concerns about NSW’s inability to provide vision-impaired electors with a secret vote, the system has clearly fulfilled its original intention.

A final point regarding the iVote model findings is connected to the 2012 regulatory changes extending iVote to electors outside NSW, and the relatively lax registration provisions for iVote in 2015 which allowed electors to self-report their eligibility. The electronic voting literature acknowledges that initial implementations of remote voting often magnify existing socio-economic biases in the electorate; besides the Estonian National Electoral Committee’s work (2016), Norris’ (2005) and Solop’s (2002) studies of the use of internet voting at UK municipal elections in 2000 demonstrated that remote voting attracted voters with high levels of formal education. We know there were 240,000 new iVotes at the 2015 NSW state election compared to the 2011 NSW state election; almost all these votes were from electors outside NSW. Without having recourse to individual level data, it is reasonable to assume that a good portion of these electors were either certainly outside NSW on Election Day, or took advantage of the self-reporting registration feature in iVote to ‘fudge’ their excuse for iVote as being outside NSW when they were in fact at home somewhere in NSW, probably in metropolitan Sydney. Whichever circumstance is correct, these electors had the resources to cast an iVote at a time that suited them. According to the Resources theory of participation, the internet thus made their vote easier. If, as we have seen, tertiary education is a strong predictor of electoral participation – and in this instance, a strong correlate of iVote at the 2015 NSW state election – we can extrapolate this finding to conclude that employment should also be considered a strong predictor of iVote at the 2015 NSW state election due to
the associative effects in the four voter turnout models. This evidence sheds light on the economic literature addressing whether employment should be seen as a measure of one’s likelihood of voting.

Chapters Seven and Eight: mixed methods observations

Considering the evidence documented in Chapter Seven, iVote can be seen as part of a protracted, long-term effort to modernise NSW’s electoral administration. While early voting was not central to this process, the combined impact of the 2006 Bill and 2010 Bill introducing iVote had the effect of liberalising access to early voting at NSW state elections, leading to a 80 percent increase in all forms of early voting between the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections. Two observations arise directly from the findings in Chapters Seven and this chapter.

The first is related to the link between the adoption of NSW’s early voting and the early voting model findings. In the empirical literature Biggers and Hanmer (2015, p.204), as noted in Chapter Three, explored the factors contributing to the adoption of no-excuse early voting in the US from 2000 to 2015. In general, using a simulation technique and some OLS models they found “that political factors played a modest role in the enactment of these policies” (2015, p.203). More specifically, they also found that “partisan state legislative strength…[exerted] little influence and control of the governorship playing a role only in enacting early voting provisions”. This situation mirrors NSW in that the 2006 Bill provisions regarding early voting were subjugated by the broader debate about modernising NSW’s electoral system. The NSW government was focused on modernisation, not technical detail, as the proposal for removing the dual declaration came from an ‘expert’ witness and was filtered through the NSW JSCEM 2003 state election inquiry process. Under these circumstances, the thesis finds a strong disconnect between the lack of partisanship influencing minor early voting reforms in NSW and the strong positive association between partisan voting patterns and early voting in the voter turnout models. Given that debate about other electoral reforms in NSW was highly politicised, two examples being political donations reform and changes to NSW’s Legislative Council voting system (Green 2016), this finding raises the interesting question; was the relatively non-partisan debate about NSW’s modernisation agenda and minor early voting reforms an aberration, or a reflection of a genuine, systematic attempt to correct NSW’s voting system to cater for increased demand for flexible voting?
Another observation relates to iVote, why it was adopted and iVote’s affect on NSW electoral participation. iVote increased 505 percent at the 2015 NSW state election, with nearly 220,000 extra electors casting a vote using the system. Yet in contrast to the US, where increases in early voting in some states have sparked intense political interest in turnout and state-level attempts to wind back early voting laws (like Florida) (Gronke and Stewart 2013), there has so far been little interest in the compositional effects of iVote. Most attention has focused on technical and security aspects of iVote (Halderman and Teague 2015). Given the model findings about the strong positive association between employment and tertiary education at the 2015 NSW state election, this raises the question as to why.

Biggers and Hanmer (2015, p.204) again provide a potential answer. In addition to lack of partisan effects they also found that the “successful adoption… [of early voting methods] depended on the utility of the voting method, with larger populations of those that would benefit from convenience voting (such as the elderly and rural residents) and increased geographic size leading to its implementation”. As shown in Chapter Seven, iVote enjoyed legislative support, and the support of the NSW JSCEM, as a means to assist NSW electors with disabilities to vote. However, how can we reconcile this, and the NSW Electoral Commission’s advocacy of iVote, against the iVote model findings showing that more than 90 percent of iVote users in 2015 probably resided in Districts with higher socio-economic resources?

Biggers and Hanmer (2015, p.206) suggest that the “threat” of introducing a reform needs to be lower than cost; yet the costs of not introducing iVote (and a secret vote for the visually impaired) for the NSW Electoral Commission, and the NSW Parliament, were relatively low. A feasible explanation here is that NSW’s legislature and electoral officials simply underestimated the impact of iVote, and the cumulative effect of removing the dual declaration and then expanding access to iVote only five years later. In 2011 and 2015 there are multiple examples of the NSW Parliament and the NSW Electoral Commission underestimating iVote’s usage; in his second reading speech in 2010 Graham West said that the NSW Electoral Commission expected around 10,000 iVotes at the 2011 NSW state election (Parliamentary Debates 2010, p.21933). In 2015 the NSW Electoral Commission also predicted around 150,000 iVotes – it received 284,000. So, in answer to the question above, we can reconcile these mixed-methods findings as a perfect example of the unintended consequences of minor electoral reform, as theorised by Renwick (2010) and earlier by Bersinky (2005, p.2). The wider drive to modernise NSW’s electoral system meant that the
Parliament – and the NSW Electoral Commission – were more receptive to faster rather than incremental change in relation to flexible voting; hence, removing both declarations and then providing an option for electors outside NSW to vote using the system, as we have seen, when evidence about the diaspora cohort is so amorphous. In this way, minor reform to early voting procedures was contingent (Shugart 2001) on national enthusiasm for enfranchising the vision-impaired. The only counter-argument here is that the NSW Electoral Commission should have probably anticipated the compositional effects of expanding iVote electors outside NSW would tend to favour people already likely to vote; as demonstrated in Chapter Three, the debate in the convenience voting literature about the effects of the early voting reforms on stimulating the electorate was well underway. Given his experience and content knowledge as the former Victorian Electoral Commissioner, Colin Barry must have been aware of these debates.
Chapter Nine: Early voting at Victorian state elections, 2002-2014

This chapter is the final chapter in this thesis to use the assessment framework. It investigates two reforms to early voting procedures for Victorian state elections; the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), the Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic). Supporting findings in Chapter Seven, the chapter finds that reform to Victoria’s early voting practices proceeded largely on bipartisan grounds, and that liberalising access to early voting was first suggested by the VEC and Colin Barry, the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner. Building on findings in Chapters Five and Seven, the chapter also demonstrates how the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee was an important player in early voting reform, although in a different way to the Commonwealth and NSW JSCEMs.

After describing the major features of the two reforms, the chapter assesses each against the six barriers in the assessment framework. The chapter then offers conclusions about the assessment framework and the drivers of these particular early voting reforms.

What reforms?

Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)

The Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) was enacted by the Victorian Parliament in June 2002. Prior to this Victoria’s electoral legislation had not been comprehensively reviewed for 50 years, with a series of minor amendments in the 1980s and 1990s clouding Victoria’s electoral architecture. As noted by Colin Barry, the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner, the result of this was that “Victoria’s electoral legislation [had] a number of deficiencies: it is extremely prescriptive in some areas and lacking in detail in other key areas; it is written in difficult language; and it does not provide for modern election management practices” (VEC 2002, p.9). Amongst other measures, it reformed the VEC, establishing the commission as a statutory authority much like the Victorian Auditor-General. It modernised party registration and introduced public funding for registered political parties. It also established the important principle that a Victorian elector must be enrolled at their principal place of residence, a key integrity check, a reform directly linked to the later adoption of direct electoral enrolment for Victorian state elections in 2010. The impact of these reforms, as noted by Liz Williams, Deputy Electoral Commissioner, in her interview, was far-reaching (Williams 2014, p.2).

The Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) also formalised arrangements for early voting. Prior to the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) electors in Victoria cast what was called an ‘oral postal vote’.
Derived from the AEC’s practice of allowing electors to present at a Divisional Returning Officer’s office to submit a postal ballot prior to Election Day (as described in Chapter Five), the oral postal vote involved electors presenting at the District or Province’s Returning Officer’s office to vote. As noted by the VEC, this was an ad-hoc process to assist electors who were aware of the practice and would otherwise not vote on Election Day (VEC 1999, p.61). Overall, the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) provided greater clarity around access to early voting in person. It created the term ‘early voting’ in s98 of the Act, removing the clunky, outmoded language associated with the oral postal vote. As noted, s65 of the Act empowered the VEC to establish early voting centres. The Act also established eight individual criteria for early voting.

Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic)

Unlike the 2002, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections, the 2006 Victorian state election was substantially affected by legislative, parliamentary and institutional change, due to the passing of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), the Constitutional (Parliamentary Reform) Bill 2003 (Vic) and 13 other pieces of instrumental legislation and regulatory changes (VEC 2006). The Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic) was passed in July 2005 following a short debate in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. Its headline provision related to amendments to s98 of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) regulating early voting in person, and postal voting. The Bill amended the Act by shortening the criteria for both forms of early voting, requiring only that an elector declare verbally that they were unable to vote on Election Day. Technically, Clause 9 of the Bill repealed the existing categories of electors who could apply for an early vote or by post, permitting “a person to apply to vote early or by post if that person makes a declaration in their application that he or she will be unable to attend an Election Day voting centre during the hours of voting on Election Day. This will enable any elector who is able to make that declaration and who wishes to apply for early or postal voting, to do so” (Clause 9, Electoral Bill 2005, p.14).

Definitions

As seen in table 9.1, the three reforms in this chapter fall within the minor and technical reform category. It is important to note that the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) was, in of itself, a major reform to Victoria’s electoral legislation, despite the new Act centralising Victoria’s electoral legislation. The principle changes to early voting affected less than 20 percent of the electorate at the time given there were only 164,170 early votes cast at the 2002 Victorian
state election, or 5.1 percent of total turnout at the 2002 Victorian state election (VEC 2002, p.23).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 9.1: Electoral reforms, Victoria, 2002-2014</th>
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<td><strong>Description of reform</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Election levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballot structure</td>
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<td>Electoral procedures</td>
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**Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic)**

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<th><strong>Minor reform</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
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<td>Ballot structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electoral procedures</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Inserting the oral declaration for early voting.</td>
<td>Empowering electoral officials to enforce the oral declaration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying the assessment framework

1. Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)

Barrier One – procedural superiority of the status quo

There is evidence that modernising Victoria’s electoral processes influenced early voting reform.

Following the Bracks government’s election in 1999 there was a general consensus in the Victorian Parliament about the need to reform Victoria’s electoral legislation (Economou and Costar 1992, p.62). Prior to 2002 the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1958 (Vic) was Victoria’s principle electoral legislation. It was the source of the majority of Victoria’s electoral procedures but had two major problems which, by the turn of the 21st century, were seen as necessary to repeal. The first was the structure of the legislation. Most of the 1958 Act’s procedures were outmoded and written in outmoded language. Making the new Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) accessible was mentioned in the explanatory memorandum. There were also incidences were the Act was plainly out of date: during his second reading speech, then Attorney-General Rob Hulls MP noted: “An example is s251 of the Act, which provides that carrying a gun, pistol, sword or bludgeon at an election is punishable by a fine of not less than $4 nor more than $40” (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.420).

Streamlining access to the oral declaration vote was also clearly on the Parliament’s reform agenda. Most commentary focused on the draft Bill’s use of the term ‘early voting’ to describe voting before Election Day. There was bipartisan support for this measure in both Chambers. Then Opposition member Victor Perton noted that incorporating ‘early voting’ involved the “language of today” (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1527). Barry Steggall, another Opposition member, argued that early voting more accurately reflected the casting of the vote before Election Day (p.1531). In addition, both Labor and Coalition members in the Legislative Assembly also revealed the House’s acceptance of changing lifestyle requirements necessitating a demand for early voting. Steggall raised the popularity of pre-poll voting in his speech, referring to the introduction of all-postal vote elections for Victorian local government polls as having an influence on early voting demand: “Pre-poll voting and postal voting have become very popular…in many parts of Victoria we have a local government system where they have purely postal voting, which we are responsible for” (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1531). Then Member for Gippsland East, Susan Davies,
also noted the pressures of societal change on Election Day voting (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1542).

Interview data also suggests that there was widespread institutional support for modernising flexible voting practices. Liz Williams, Deputy Victorian Electoral Commissioner, commented that in her 20 plus years of experience with the VEC, there was a perception prior to the introduction of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) that “early voting needed to be codified…as it was likely to be popular in future” (Williams 2014, p.2). Bernie Finn MLC, former Chair of the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters committee, offered his recollection of the debates around the 2002 Bill; he particularly felt there was some acceptance about the “inevitability” of early voting (Finn 2014, p.2). Another interviewee, who requested confidentiality, said their campaign to enter Parliament in the Legislative Council was “aware of the need to appeal to pre-poll voters, as it was very popular” (Anonymous, p.4).

Barrier Two – political tradition

Political tradition had little influence on the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), or the Act’s early voting reforms. During the interview program, several interviewees said that there were no particular cultural or historical reasons why Victoria would embrace early voting more than other Australian jurisdictions. Amongst commissioners Warwick Gately AM, Victorian Electoral Commissioner, and Liz Williams, Deputy Electoral Commissioner, said that early voting trends in Victoria, NSW and Queensland were relatively similar (Williams and Gately 2014, p.5). Linda Franklin, Director, NSW Electoral Commissioner, also supported this view (Franklin 2014, p.2). Bill Shepheard, former NT Electoral Commissioner, also noted that he saw no reason why Victoria would have been “any different to… other states, given that early voting was not popular around the time of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)” (Shepheard 2013, p.3). Amongst members of Parliament, interviewees also agreed that there were no special historical circumstances compelling reform of early voting practices in Victoria; while Victorian interviewees did not discuss this issue, Dr Peter Phelps, member of the NSW JSCEM, said that he would be “surprised”, based on his experience as an administrator of the NSW Liberal Party, “if early voting…was on the minds of legislators in Victoria 20 years ago” (Phelps 2014, p.p.-5-6).
Barrier Three – systemic balance and efficiency

While it took Labor nearly 20 years from its 1982 election victory to Bracks’ election in 2002 to secure favourable parliamentary conditions for electoral reform, it is not clear that Bracks’ agenda extended to minor electoral reforms (Costar 2003, p.4). During the 1999 election campaign Bracks did not link his institutional reform platform to administrative electoral reform: as we shall see in barrier six, there were greater pressures for administrative change from the VEC. Hansard also offers little support for the idea, as did interviewees. Candy Broad, who was a member of the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters committee in the 56th Parliament and prior to that the Assistant National Secretary of the Australian Labor Party from 1994 to 1999, said that Victorian Labor did not have firm views about early voting during her time as Assistant National Secretary (Broad 2014, p.4). Due to this, we can conclude that systemic influences on early voting reform at the time of the introduction of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) were negligible.

Barrier Four – actors’ vested interests

As in Chapters Five and Seven, there is little evidence that either Victorian Labor or the Coalition saw electoral advantage in Victoria’s oral declaration vote process and clarifying terminology in clause 90 of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic). While several Coalition members criticised the Electoral Reform Bill in second reading speeches by extrapolating, in a thinly veiled political attack, to Bracks’ desire for broader constitutional reform – then Member for Koonung Bruce Atkinson said that the Bill was attempt by Labor to “tilt the rules of game in their favour” (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1379) and in the Legislative Assembly, Perton attempted to bait Labor over it’s ‘real’ intentions (p.1527) – both sides of politics seemed to support the terminology change and the Bill’s essential thrust of modernising Victoria’s electoral processes. Outside Victoria, Candy Broad’s comments about the lack of interest amongst Victorian Labor in the 1990s were supported by Dr Peter Phelps. He said that “there would have been very few people [in Victoria] at that time interested in that [oral declaration voting], in my opinion” (Phelps 2014, p.2).

Interestingly, compared to Chapters Five and Seven, there is evidence of some partisan concern from the then Liberal Opposition about the systematisation of early voting. In their second reading speeches several Coalition members observed that the original version of the Bill contained a clause permitting “no excuse” early voting. However, this was watered down during the committee stage to changes to the ‘early voting’ terminology. Victor Perton
observed that Election Day had important, socialising effects and that the decision to repeal universal access was understandable (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1527).

In the Legislative Council, then Member for North Eastern Province Bill Baxter cautioned against a laisse-faire approach to early voting:

> While I do not dispute the principle that we need to make provision for persons who will not easily be able to vote on Election Day and that they should have an opportunity to vote and directly without having to formally apply for a postal vote, I would be concerned if early vote were to be extended (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1389).

In these comments, there is evidence that the procedural superiority of a less regulated approach to early voting, while ultimately surmounted, had some influence on negotiations.

**Barrier Five – parliamentary oversight of electoral administration**

The Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters committee was formed in 2006 by amendments to the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 (Vic) following the 2006 Victorian state election. Prior to this there is no evidence of parliamentary, institutional or political party interest in parliamentary oversight of electoral administration, or its relationship to early voting, beyond passing references to the Commonwealth JSCEM during adjournment debates for the Constitution Amendment Bill 1995 (Vic) (Parliamentary Debates Vic 1995, p.885, 874, 960).

**Barrier Six - role of electoral commission**

There is evidence that the VEC, and Colin Barry, the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner, directly influenced the codification of early voting arrangements in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic).

One of Barry’s first duties as commissioner was overseeing the conduct of the 1999 Victorian state election. The VEC’s report to Parliament on the election reported the results of the election and other routine electoral analysis expected of the VEC. Unlike previous State Electoral Office reports though, it contained recommendations about Victoria’s electoral administration, including an overarching call for a “root and branch” review of the Victoria’s electoral legislation (VEC 1999, p.60). According to Barry, while there were “a number of significant changes made to Victoria’s electoral law when Parliament passed The Constitution Act Amendment (Amendment) Act 1999 (Vic), these changes made a positive
contribution to the conduct of the 1999 [Victorian] state election but could have gone further” (VEC 1999, p.61). The report specifically noted that the need for a coherent, modern legislative framework, one that would make it easier for the VEC to run elections and for candidates to adhere to the law:

> It is now necessary for a complete review of electoral legislation so that it is easy for candidates and other election stakeholders to understand, without having to seek legal advice; is consistent in prescribing procedures; and provides for modern management practices and the use of technology in the administration of parliamentary elections (VEC 1999, p.60).

Based on this, Barry advised his intention to recommend a wholesale review of Victoria’s electoral legislation to the Attorney-General. It is notable that the report, at this point, shifts to the use of the first person: it is designed to give the impression that Barry, not just the VEC, promulgated change. The report lists eight priority areas for reform, focusing on minor and technical electoral reforms. While some flowed organically from circumstances related to recent Victorian state elections – such as Barry’s recommendation to codify the procedure if a candidate died during an election campaign, as was the case in Frankston East District at the 1999 Victorian state election – others involved speculation, including examining the postmark on postal envelopes (fortuitous given Australia Post’s adoption of a three-day regular mail service in 2015) and a review of how election material on websites was authorised (VEC 1999, p.60).

One such focus was on oral declaration voting. Barry called for the oral declaration vote terminology to be changed as it was “confusing” and should be replaced with pre-poll voting (VEC 1999, p.60). We know from barrier four that Parliament settled on early voting. Secondly, he called for Victorians to have access to early voting “as of right” (VEC 1999, p.60). Barry wrote:

> There are statutory qualifications that an elector is required to satisfy in order to be eligible for an ‘oral postal vote’…It is difficult to enforce these statutory qualifications as electors believe that they can vote as of right before Election Day, and many electors go to considerable effort to attend a returning officer’s office before Election Day in order to vote in this way. The legislation should be amended to reflect electors’ changing lifestyles and to provide for pre-poll voting as of right (VEC 1999, p.p.60-61).
Although Barry’s call for unrestricted early voting was ultimately rejected by Parliament, we know that members of Parliament were aware that the source of the “as or right” early voting proposal was the VEC, not the Executive or Parliament. In his speech introducing the Bill to the Legislative Assembly, then Attorney-General Rob Hulls noted that the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) was based on a number of recommendations made by the Victorian Electoral Commissioner, as did Victor Perton (Parliamentary Debates 2002, p.1556; 1558). In the Legislative Council Bill Baxter also observed that the Bill was influenced by the VEC’s proposals. In addition, several Members in both Houses also commented that the VEC’s original proposals were modified or changed following negotiations between the governing Labor Party and independent Members in the Legislative Assembly (who held the balance of power in the 54th Victorian Parliament (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1558; 1556). Barry’s role in codifying minor reforms to early voting in the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) was thus essential.

**Reform One: Conclusions**

According to many commentators on Victorian politics, including Economou (2006) and the Victorian Electoral Matters Committee (2010, p.iii), the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) remains the most significant revision of Victoria’s electoral legislation since the introduction of compulsory voting in 1927. While the Parliament began updating legislation in 1999 with the *Constitution Amendment Act 1999* (Vic), the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) achieved the VEC’s, and the Parliament’s, aim of modernising Victoria’s electoral mechanisms for the 21st century, including institutionalising early voting in Victoria’s electoral architecture.

Using the assessment framework, the chapter demonstrated that the adoption and codification of Victoria’s early voting laws in 2002 owes more to the advocacy of the VEC and Colin Barry, the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner, than partisan interest, political tradition or systemic balance. Victoria was no more disposed than other states to early voting at the turn of the 21st century, and to the extent that the VEC’s original proposal to allow as of right early voting at Victorian state elections was ultimately checked by the Parliament – demonstrating the influence of the status-quo on minor electoral reform – the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) still systematised the practice of oral declaration voting into early voting. Such advocacy by the VEC confirms Tham’s (2013, p.7-9) arguments about the increasing role of Australian electoral commissions in setting electoral rules and regulations.
2. *Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic)*

**Barrier One – procedural superiority of the status quo**

This 2005 Bill was introduced to the Legislative Assembly in 2005 by then Attorney General Hulls as another step in the continuous process to improve and modernise Victoria’s electoral legislation. Despite the Bill’s modernisation agenda, there was little, if any, discussion about the Bill’s provisions abolishing the criteria for early and postal voting and replacing it with an oral declaration. Of the 28 second reading speeches, only two discussed early voting at any length; all 28 discussed amendments to s24 of the *Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)* to allow any
Victorian elector aged 7 or over to be a general postal voter\textsuperscript{40}. On early voting, then Member for Lara, Craig Loney, discussed how early voting was increasing at Victorian and Australian elections and that it might be wise in light of this trend to make it easier for electors to vote before Election Day (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.1027).

Due to the lack of debate about the oral declaration clause, it is not entirely clear why it was included in the 2005 Bill. For instance, the VEC’s report to Parliament on the 2002 Victorian state election made nine recommendations for legislative change following on from the election and the implementation of the \textit{Electoral Act 2002} (Vic); however, none addressed early voting. Similarly, interviewees who were familiar with Victorian electoral administration in 2005 also offered no explanation for the clause. Bernie Finn, former Chair of the Victorian Electoral Matters Committee, said there was little “administrative awareness” of early voting in the Victorian Liberal Party between 2002 and 2006, based on his close knowledge of the party’s campaigning strategies during that time due to his efforts to re-secure his place in Parliament (Finn 2014, p.p.1-5).\textsuperscript{41} On this basis, there was no procedural impetus from the Parliament or the VEC to further amend Victoria’s early voting procedures.

\textit{Barrier Two – political tradition}

Some interviewees suggested that there was a growing awareness of early voting at Victorian state elections by the time of the 2006 Victorian state election – Candy Broad said that parties were “continuously engaging” with electors due to increased early voting (Broad 2014, p.p-2-3); speaking about Victoria, Senator Scott Ryan argued that political parties develop strategies around administrative rules governing access to voting, such as the 2005 Bill, and that the oral declaration clause would have been “watched closely” (Scott Ryan 2014, p.9). However, while the 2005 Bill can be linked to the Bracks’ government’s electoral administration reform agenda – of the 28 second reading speeches, 20 linked the 2005 Bill to the \textit{Electoral Act 2002} (Vic) (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.p.1021-1027) – political tradition is not related to the oral declaration clause.

\textsuperscript{40} A general postal voter is one who always receives their vote by post, due to reasons of old age, distance from a polling place or several other conditions provided for in legislation. All Australian jurisdictions provide for general postal voters.

\textsuperscript{41} Finn lost his seat of Tullamarine District at the 1999 Victorian state election. He was re-elected to Parliament in 2006 representing Western Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council.
Barrier Three – systemic balance and efficiency

In contrast to parliamentary debate about the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), when the Parliament and the VEC advocated changes to early voting due to the popularity of oral declaration voting, there is no evidence to suggest that the Parliament or the VEC was concerned about whether there were systemic impediments preventing people from voting early.

Barrier Four – actors’ self interest

In relative contrast to the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), the 2005 Bill was supported by the Bracks government, Coalition Opposition and Independent members in the Legislative Assembly, suggesting Victoria’s political parties supported easing access to early voting. In his second reading speech Attorney General Rob Hulls said the Bill was designed to “maximise electoral participation” in Victorian elections (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.651). This sentiment was shared by 16 of the 28 second reading speeches (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.p.651-699), including those by Coalition members, notably Murray Thompson (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.654) and Independents; then Member for Mildura, Russell Savage, said he supported the Bill on the grounds that it improved Victoria’s democracy and that the majority of provisions were appropriate (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.1034), as did Craig Ingram, the then Member for Gippsland East (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.1036).

Of the three second reading references to early voting, both Government and Opposition members viewed the introduction of the oral declaration for early and postal voting as a measure to improve electoral participation. On the Government side then Member for Prahran, Tony Lupton, explained that the new s98 would make it easier for people to vote early (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.1007). On the Opposition side, Andrew McIntosh focused on how the first iteration of s98 in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) made it difficult for people to vote early:

What this bill does is remove all of the criteria set out in section 98 and provide for one simple test, which is that you have to make a declaration that you are unable to attend a polling place on a polling day (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.1007; p.1000).

If one party felt that the change would benefit them more than the other, this is not supported in parliamentary debates, secondary literature or VEC’s reports to Parliament. Further, only
one second reading speech discussed whether a more liberal criterion was appropriate in light of early voting demand:

I think the interesting thing to note is that in my electorate -- this may very well be the case elsewhere… – increasingly the trend is for people to exercise that right to cast a vote early at a district returning office and not even apply for a postal vote. Of course that will change the dynamics of elections if it becomes widespread (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2005, p.1007).

*Barrier Five – parliamentary oversight of electoral administration*

Given that the Victorian Electoral Matters Committee was formed in 2007, two years after the 2005 Bill, this barrier explores the committee’s deliberations regarding the implementation of the oral declaration.

While the committee said relatively little about early voting in the 56th Parliament (2006-2010) – its first four inquiries mentioned early voting only in an administrative sense, and few inquiry participants discussed the issue – in the 57th Parliament (2010-2014) the committee had a strong interest in early voting and, in particular, the operation of s98 of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic). There were two catalysts. Firstly, there was a 100 percent increase in early voting between the 2006 and 2010 Victorian state elections. Over 540,000 Victorian electors voted early at the 2010 Victorian state election, the first held following the implementation of the 2005 Bill (VEC 2010, p.iv). Secondly, inquiry participants showed considerable interest in early voting. Ninety percent of submissions to the committee’s first inquiry in the Parliament on the 2010 Victorian state election mentioned early voting in some capacity, with 91 percent of submissions referring to criteria governing access to early voting under s98 of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) – these included submissions from Victorian Labor, the Victorian Greens and several other political parties. Similarly, 85 percent of submissions to the committee’s second inquiry into the future of Victoria’s electoral administration also mentioned early voting, with several also discussing s98 (Parliament of Victoria 2011; 2015).

The committee’s view about early voting evolved over the 57th Parliament. Early on, the committee adopted a cautious – and sceptical – view of the increase in early voting at Victorian state elections. Specifically, it accused the VEC of being somehow responsible for stimulating rates of early voting. The committee’s focus was on the oral declaration; it argued
that while the VEC “could not be solely responsible for stimulating a 202 percent increase in early voting since the 2002 Victorian state election, the committee suspects there may be a relationship between increased rates of early voting in person at Victorian state elections and the VEC’s practices and possible policy directives. The committee believes the VEC’s policy in relation to early voting has changed, to the extent that the VEC now only loosely enforces the criteria to ensure electors who wish to vote early in person are qualified to do so” (Parliament of Victoria 2011, p.81). This scepticism matched the views of Victoria’s political parties at the time; many were openly critical of early voting and the early voting period. The Nationals Victoria were especially scathing; they called early voting an “attack on Victoria’s democracy” (Parliament of Victoria 2011, p.80). Victorian Labor was more circumspect, requesting the committee undertake a “strategic examination of pre-poll voting at Victorian state elections, with a view to determining whether the practice was a good thing and whether it was appropriate for such a large number of electors to be voting before Election Day (Parliament of Victoria 2011, p.78). Moreover, these views contrast substantively to parliamentary debate about the 2005 Bill, where Members were almost entirely unconcerned about clause 10 and repealing the criteria in lieu of the oral declaration in s98.

However, during the later stages of the 57th Parliament the committee softened its stance on early voting and the VEC’s alleged misinterpretation of s98. As part of the 2010 Victorian state election inquiry the VEC prepared a document called “Shaping Victoria’s electoral administration” (Parliament of Victoria 2012, p.31). The document signposted the VEC’s interest in the committee reviewing the “overall direction” of Victoria’s electoral administration, focusing on some of the key changes affecting the Victorian electoral environment, including the impact of technology on Victoria’s electoral processes (i.e. electronic voting), enrolment processes, the growth of convenience voting. Seeing the VEC’s document as imprimatur, the committee self-referenced an inquiry into the future of Victoria’s electoral administration, during which it ultimately reversed its opposition to the VEC’s interpretation of s98, and the oral declaration. Whereas the committee in 2010 and 2011 outwardly questioned the validity of s98, the committee in 2012 found (Finding 3.1) “that early voting is now an established component of Victoria’s electoral practice…It provides many Victorians with opportunities to vote which suit their work, social and lifestyle choices” (Parliament of Victoria 2012, p.p.31-32).

Moreover, this acceptance flowed through to the 58th Parliament, where the committee’s position evolved once more. During the inquiry into the 2014 Victorian state election the
committee received several submissions from independent and minor party candidates about the efficacy of s98 of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic); the content of one submission, from Maria Rigoni, a Palmer United Candidate in Northern Metropolitan Region, is discussed in barrier six. Suffice to say, the submissions recommended that the Parliament tighten access to early voting by reconstituting separate criteria for early voting and postal voting under s98. The committee did not support this view. It noted:

…there has been a shift in community expectations around access to early voting. Many Victorians now expect – and rely on – flexible voting services due to social and lifestyle factors, and employment. The committee also notes that this shift has been accompanied by widespread understanding in the community about the need to provide an oral declaration to vote early at Victorian state elections. Given current demand for early voting, it would not be appropriate to impose an additional declaration hurdle on Victorian electors (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.46).

Over two parliamentary terms, the Electoral Matters Committees came to tacitly support the oral declaration in the 2005 Bill. Thus far in the 58th Parliament, the committee has also supported tightening administrative procedures for early voting; in response to the VEC’s suggestion that a parcel of early votes be counted on Election Night – at the time of writing early votes are counted on the Monday after Election Saturday – the committee recommended that all early votes cast in an elector’s ‘Home’ District be counted on Election Night (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.46).

This type of influence is an example of what Russell and Benton (2011, p.81) and Hawes (1993) call a “non-quantifiable” committee impact. Although the 2005 Bill was passed before the committee’s formation in 2007, the committee later played an important role critiquing and assessing the oral declaration, drawing attention to how it operated and the VEC’s administration of s98; this is discussed in barrier six. It also performed a similar function during the 56th Parliament in relation to the introduction of direct enrolment in Victoria. In the 56th Parliament, the committee learnt that the rate of electoral enrolment in Victoria was declining; traditional enumeration methods, such as door-to-door roll checking and mail outs to remind electors to update their details after a change of address, where ineffective at stimulating roll maintenance. Accordingly, many inquiry participants recommended the introduction of direct enrolment for Victorian state elections, to be administered by the VEC under information sharing agreements with other Victorian government agencies (Brent and
The VEC also tacitly endorsed the efficacy of direct enrolment in its submission (Parliament of Victoria 2009, p.215).

Despite the then Coalition Opposition members of the committee tabling a minority report with the majority committee’s report on the 2006 Victorian state election – the minority report outlined the Coalition’s objections to direct enrolment – the Electoral Amendment (Electoral Participation) Bill 2010 (Vic) was passed in August 2010, just before the 2010 Victorian state election, introducing direct enrolment for Victorian state elections. In this instance, the committee’s deliberations served as the “tipping point” for the policy debate. Analysing the debate text for the 2010 Bill, Reader (2014a, p.502) found that for the Legislative Assembly, 16 members, or 18 per cent, of a total 88 members gave a speech during the second reading debate for the Bill. They also demonstrated, as with the s98 deliberations, that the committee was considering an important question: should the Parliament, or the VEC, determine electoral rules relating to voting procedures and electoral participation?

Barrier Six – role of electoral commission

Reform One demonstrated that the VEC and Colin Barry, the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner, were important advocates for many of the reforms to voting procedures in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic). What role did the VEC play in relation to the oral declaration and the 2005 Bill?

Before analysing this matter it is important to note some key personnel and institutional changes at the VEC post-2005. Firstly, Colin Barry resigned as Victorian Electoral Commissioner in 2005 and moved to NSW to become NSW Electoral Commissioner. Barry was eventually replaced by Steve Tully. Tully was formerly the South Australian Electoral Commissioner from 1996 to 2005 and prior to this held several executive roles with the arts, mental health and the Department for Local Government. Secondly, following Tully’s appointment, the VEC took a less proactive approach to how it advised government on electoral policy and administration issues. In contrast to Barry’s forthright advocacy – which was the catalyst for the clarifying reforms to early voting in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) and pivotal, as shown in Chapter Seven, to the introduction of iVote in NSW and the modernisation of NSW’s electoral legislation – Tully adopted a more cautious stance. In the VEC’s report to Parliament on the 2006 Victorian state election, Tully’s foreword / introduction noted that the “VEC also accepts that it administers the law as passed by
Parliament and must remain neutral on policy matters such as compulsory voting and methods of voting” (VEC 2007, p.12). This statement was undoubtedly influenced by the formation of the Electoral Matters Committee, which coincided with Tully’s initial appointment; this was the first time the VEC or a Commissioner was required to appear before a committee to justify its findings and / or elaborate on the results of a state election (Parliament of Victoria 2007, p.6).

Despite the VEC’s clear position on policy matters, it is also important to consider that the VEC interpreted this maxim rather loosely in relation to direct enrolment, as shown in barrier five. During the committee’s public hearings for the 2006 state election inquiry, Tully used the public hearings to explain how traditional role enumeration methods were failing to maintain the electoral register and that as many as 30 percent of VEC enrolment mail outs were unsuccessful. Tully noted:

The response rates are getting lower and lower because the form is getting more and more complex. People want to do it online or they want it easier or they will say, ‘Well, you already know. The government already knows where I am. Why can't you just use that record?’ It is a different mindset in the public that we are dealing with, expecting that they are going to sit down and fill out what on first sight is probably a complex looking form and they are voting with their feet, so to speak, by not returning it. We are getting 30 per cent response rate to our mail outs and to our doorknock (Tully 2007, p.p.6-7).

Further, during the 2008/2009 inquiry into voter participation and informal voting, the VEC’s submission was effusive: direct enrolment could potentially admit another 80,000 to 100,000 votes at Victorian state elections (VEC 2008, p.11). To this end, in its submission to that inquiry the VEC described direct enrolment as a joint policy aim, involving the VEC, the Victorian government and other stakeholders such as community and advocacy groups; (VEC 2008, p.32). Here we have further evidence of the Electoral Matters Committee’s role in arbitrating policy change. In this case, the committee provided the VEC with an opportunity to air policy initiatives (Russell and Benton 2011, p.82) around direct enrolment, without having to specifically advocate for the measure; this example is conceptually similar to the NSW JSCEM’s role in relation to iVote, where the NSW Electoral Commission leverage expert and key evidence from electors with vision impairment to create momentum for remote voting. Regarding direct enrolment, the VEC had something to gain; a ‘full’ roll
assisted the VEC to meet its statutory responsibility to ensure that all eligible Victorians participated in Victorian state elections (VEC 2016, p.iii). By appearing at public hearings and making submissions throughout the 56th Parliament, the VEC directly contributed to the case for legislative change and worked collaboratively with the Parliament to pass minor electoral reform.

2005 Bill

How does this information inform our understanding of the VEC’s role in relation to the 2005 Bill and the oral declaration?

There is no direct evidence that the VEC has directly supported the oral declaration publicly since 2005. As seen in barrier five, during the 57th Parliament the Electoral Matters Committee virtually accused the VEC of stimulating demand for early voting by misapplying the oral declaration and not providing appropriate instructions to electoral officials at early voting centres about the declaration; that is, that electoral officials were simply forgetting to ask the question required of the declaration “Are you unable to vote on Election Day?” As part of the inquiry into the 2010 Victorian state election the then committee was openly hostile; in correspondence to the VEC on 13 March 2012 Bernie Finn MLC, then Chair, wrote that the “committee is of the view that there has been a change of policy at the VEC to encourage early voting. The committee believes that the VEC has actively encouraged, and contributed to, the significant in increase in early voting at recent Victorian state elections” (Correspondence Finn 2012, p.1). The committee also wanted information about the VEC’s ‘policies’ in relation to early voting (2012, p.1), and information about its quality assurance processes to ensure that electoral officials were being instructed about the oral declaration. The VEC complied with all these requests; during the inquiry it provided a separate response to the committee’s requests, detailing its training procedures for early voting centres and reiterating that the VEC did not have a ‘policy’ for early voting. The VEC noted that it was its role to administer s98 as set out in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic); the only commentary it was willing to offer was that early voting was “very popular” and likely to increase (VEC 2012, p.2).

However, while there may not be a ‘smoking gun’ linking the VEC directly to support for the oral declaration, there is other evidence suggesting that the committee’s concerns about the VEC taking a liberal approach to enforcing of the oral declaration had some validity. In 2014 the Victorian Supreme Court, sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns, heard a challenge to
the 2014 Victorian state election on the basis of the VEC’s alleged misapplication of procedures governing early voting; this is the first time a Victorian state election, and indeed an Australian election post-Federation, had been challenged on the basis of voting procedures. While the challenge was formally dismissed in March 2015 and the petition denied, it is worth considering some of the key details of the legal case, as they provide some insight into the VEC’s position vis-à-vis the oral declaration.

During proceedings Maria Rigoni, a then candidate for the Palmer United Party and later participant in the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee inquiry into the 2014 Victorian state election, alleged that the VEC had failed to comply with the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) because it did not require early voters to make a declaration that they were unable to vote on Election Day. Under s99 of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic), a voter may apply to vote early to an election manager or an election official at an early voting centre. Rigoni produced affidavits from a half-dozen electors who told the Court that they voted at an early voting centre but were not asked to confirm their eligibility. In his findings, Justice Garde J noted:

…the declaration was simply not sought or given when they attended and voted at early voting centres during the early voting period. In some instances, they and Ms Rigoni gave evidence that other electors informed them that the declaration was not administered when those other electors attended at early voting centres to vote. Ms Bozin’s evidence might suggest that the staff of the mobile early voting centre that she attended were more concerned to ensure that as many electors voted as possible, rather than to see the requirements of the Act observed if early voting was to be permitted (VSC 97, p.63).

Importantly, Justice Garde J concluded “that there were instances of non-compliance with s98(b), where electors were not asked whether they were unable to attend an election day voting centre during the hours of voting on Election Day” (VSC 97, p.65). He also concluded “on the basis of the Commission’s evidence as well as that of the petitioner that intending early voters were not advised that they had to make an oral declaration to an election officer that they were unable to attend an election day voting centre during the hours of voting on Election Day” (VSC 97, p.66). So, the finding was two pronged; there were “instances” where electors had voted early when they probably could have voted on Election Day, and “instances” when VEC staff did not ask early voters whether they could vote on Election Day.
Although the VEC never officially conceded during proceedings that some Election Managers might have failed to follow s98 fully – the VEC argued that, to the best of the VEC’s knowledge, staff were aware of the requirements of s98 and how to apply them (VSC 97, p.63) – Liz Williams, Deputy Electoral Commissioner, said in her evidence that the VEC had an obligation to ensure that s98 was properly applied at Victorian state elections (VSC 97, p.64).

Further, this chapter provides additional, evidentiary support for Garde J’s findings in the VEC’s training materials for early voting centres which were not explored fully during VSC 97. All members of the VEC’s Senior Electoral Official pool are appointed and authorised by the VEC to manage either a District or a Region at a Victorian state election or by-election. Election Managers are usually assisted by at least one Deputy Election Manager, and a team of casual election officials. Management appointees are drawn from the VEC’s Senior Electoral Official pool of around 250 staff. All Election Managers and Deputy Election Managers must participate in a comprehensive training program as a requirement of joining the Senior Election Official pool. This training involves a one-week workshop and other training activities in the lead up to an election, including online and take home training. As part of this training, Election Managers are informed of their obligations under the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), including the effective management of voting centres. Election Managers also participate in activities with senior VEC staff, which simulate potential voting centre scenarios.42

While the VEC’s training processes are of a high standard – and probably ‘best practice’ in the Australian context given what we learnt in Chapters Five about issues around vote processing arising from the 2013 federal election – this chapter identifies a key inconsistency in the VEC’s training materials relating to s98. Each state election the VEC issues a “Voting Centre Manual for Early Voting Centres”. The manual is meant to be a handbook for Election Managers which they can refer to for procedural and administrative advice during the early voting period, and certainly, in addition to the advice available through the Election Liaison Officer. It is an otherwise exhaustive and comprehensive document. Referring to Extract 9.1 from the 2006 and 2010 Victorian state election Early Voting Centre Manuals, there is a

42 I have also participated in the Senior Electoral Official training, joining the pool in late 2015 after completing the SEO training program in September and October 2015. As an important disclaimer about the role of the researcher in this process, and concerns around how close I am to the subject matter, I should note that this was not designed to critique the VEC’s coursework; I was genuinely interested in joining the VEC’s management pool for state elections, with a view to furthering my career prospects in election management. Any insights I derived from participation are tangential to this aim.
section relating to vote issuing. On closer inspection, 2006 is different to 2010. The 2006 manual is missing instructions to ask electors whether they are unable to vote on Election Day.

Extract 9.1: VEC Early Voting Centre Manuals, 2006 and 2010

2006, p.13

“Issuing procedures; Ask the 3 prescribed questions

All electors except silent electors seeking an early vote must be asked to the following questions before being issued with ballot papers.

What is your full name?

Where do you live?

Have you voted in this election before?”

2010, p.18

“Issuing procedures; Ask the elector if they are unable to vote on election day. If the answer is, yes proceed to issue a vote as described in this section”.


This is not an insubstantial omission. Firstly, it relates to the 2010 Victorian state election, when early voting increased to 540,000 electors. The timing bolsters an argument that the omission was, most likely, an administrative oversight resulting from the comprehensive legislative changes introduced just before the 2006 state election; an honest mistake, perhaps? It also raises questions about employment continuity. Given that many electoral officials in Australia have long tenure (Sawer 2001; Brent 2008), and the challenges faced by electoral commissions retaining long term staff, it is possible that the Election Managers who saw this document in 2006 were probably reemployed at future Victorian state elections, especially if they were part of the Senior Election Official pool. Even if they received updated documentation, that first training was in many ways pivotal. Several interviewees discussed this scenario. Although not based in Victoria, Dr Peter Phelps felt it was “entirely plausible” that an electoral commission might inadvertently pass on incorrect training instructions to election staff, and that this might have contributed, over time, to more people voting early (Phelps 2014, p.p.5-7). Bernie Finn also agreed with the notion that some election staff may
have incorrectly interpreted s98 by not asking electors to declare their eligibility to vote early (Finn 2014, p.4).

Due to the VEC’s excellent reputation in the Australian and international electoral management community, it is unlikely that this oversight was intentional. However, returning to the question posed in the Introduction about who benefits from electoral reform, what was the effect of this? Regardless of VSC 97 and the findings above, the VEC probably stimulated demand for early voting by employing casual electoral staff, who then inadvertently misapplied s98 as an ‘excuse’ for not voting in Election Day rather than a question which required an answer in order to vote. This made it easier for the VEC to ensure the smooth operation of early voting centres at the 2010 Victorian state election, given the 110 percent increase in early voting at the 2010 Victorian state election. The VEC thus unintentionally fostered acceptance of the oral declaration.

**Reform Two: Conclusions**

Like the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic), partisan interest, political tradition or systemic balance cannot explain the 2005 Bill’s insertion of the oral declaration for early voting into the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic). However, the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee played a crucial role in relation to the reforms. While the committee was not formed until 2007, it later reviewed s98 of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic). It initially opposed the oral declaration, accusing the VEC of misinterpreting it, but then accepted that unrestricted access to early voting was an essential feature of Victorian state elections. This policy shift and endorsement is further evidence of the committee’s capacity to arbitrate policy debates in Victoria; the committee’s role in assisting the VEC to establish legislative support for direct enrolment in the 56th Parliament was an important step in this process.

In barriersix we also see the influence of external actors, as theorised by Renwick (2010, p.19), on administrative electoral reform. In this case, the Supreme Court of Victoria, sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns, independently judged that there had been cases where Election Managers at early voting centres had selectively interpreted s98 regarding the oral declaration; this finding is supported by inconsistencies highlighted in election manuals. Nevertheless, these findings cannot be interpreted as causal evidence of a link between increased early voting at Victorian state elections and the VEC’s administrative practices. Yet they do show that how electoral commissions apply electoral rules relating to voting procedures can be highly contested.
Chapter conclusions

This chapter analysed the codification of Victoria’s early voting laws in 2002 via the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), and later liberalisation of early voting procedures in the 2005 Bill. The assessment framework found some common themes in the minor reform process.

Regarding barriers one and two, it is clear that the introduction of modern legislation governing access to early voting in Victoria through the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) was influenced by Victorian Labor, and the then Bracks government’s, program to modernise Victoria’s parliamentary institutions. The Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) was the most comprehensive rewrite of Victoria’s electoral legislation in over 50 years, far surpassing
attempts in the 1990s to facilitate modernisation. Victoria’s electoral legislation was antiquated, involving an ad hoc process for allowing votes before Election Day through the ‘oral postal vote’. Tightening regulations in this area fit with the general institutional reform narrative (Costar 2003, p.12) and mirrors findings about NSW’s modernisation agenda in Chapter Five. It also gives currency to interview evidence (Williams 2014, p.3; Phelps 2014, p.2; Gately 2014, p.5) that there was substantial, cross-jurisdictional similarities in early voting in the mid-2000s.

As shown in Chapters Five and Seven, partisan interest had little influence on codifying Victoria’s early voting laws. Or, for that matter, replacing the substantive criteria in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) with the oral declaration vote in the 2005 Bill. Evidence from Hansard, interviewees and secondary sources demonstrates there was some awareness about the rising trend of early voting at Victorian state elections from 2002 to 2006. In fact, if there was a discernible attitude, it was one of general acceptance. Most second reading speeches for the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) and the Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic) did not question the right of Victorians to vote early. Only a few Members worried about permitting ‘as of right’ early voting in 2002; by 2005 there was little, if any, overt opposition to such a proposal.

If this is the case, then what drove the adoption of Victoria’s early voting legislation? Using the assessment framework, it is clear the VEC has played a crucial role in adopting and codification of Victoria’s early voting procedures. In 2002 the decision to overhaul Victoria’s electoral legislation owes more to the advocacy of the VEC and the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner, Colin Barry, than partisan interest, political tradition or systemic balance. We know that Barry, the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner, proposed to the Parliament, via the 1999 Victorian state election report, to review Victoria’s electoral architecture. The importance of this statement cannot be underestimated. The commissioner, empowered by a new VEC structure, felt free to recommend changes to Victoria’s legislation without political interference. This is neatly captured in parliamentary debates:

JENNINGS – On the way through there has been a clear role played by Colin Barry and his team at the VEC… played a prominent role in this exercise…

INGRAM – He said he basically had a free hand with no political interference in the process he went through of updating the legislation to make it more relevant to today's society, to the way we vote and to the way things happen out on the ground.
We thought, “This is a really good process”. We were told that half of the provisions in this bill will make changes to the [Electoral Act] and that the review had been done totally free of political influence (Parliamentary Debates Vic 2002, p.1547).

Given that we know, from Chapter Seven, that Barry was instrumental in overhauling NSW’s electoral legislation prior to moving Victoria, and for introducing iVote in 2011, it is reasonable to say that Victoria’s liberalised approach to early voting was probably contingent (Shugart 2001) on Barry, and relatedly, the VEC. It is also fair to extend this conclusion to another; that making it easier for people to vote early probably suited the VEC, making its job easier. In fact, the VEC seemed prepared, under Barry and possibly Tully, to do whatever it could to fulfil its organisational mission of having all eligible Victorians participate in their democracy. Hughes (2003) argued that electoral commissioners were passionate about their role. This is an excellent example of how this passion might have veered into policy advocacy.

The VEC’s role in reform was later moderated by the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee. While the committee was not formed until the 56th Parliament, in the 56th and 57th Parliaments it later reviewed s98 of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic). It initially opposed the oral declaration, accusing the VEC of misinterpreting it, but then accepted that unrestricted access to early voting was an essential feature of Victorian state elections. This policy shift and endorsement is further evidence of the committee’s capacity to arbitrate and influence policy debates in Victoria; the committee’s role assisting the VEC to establish legislative support, and a case for, direct enrolment in the 56th Parliament was a preliminary step in this process. While we cannot say with definitive confidence that the interplay between the VEC and the Electoral Matters committee in the 57th and 58th Parliaments contributed to the rise of early voting at Victorian state elections, the lack of executive level insights from this period – and insights from interviewees – suggests this is a plausible explanation.

As for the explanatory power of the assessment framework in relation to Victoria, this chapter captured the underlying drivers of early voting reforms in Victoria from 2002 to 2014. The only explanatory blackspot is the influence of the Victorian Supreme Court, via the Rigoni case. Justice Garde J’s finding that some of the VEC’s Election Managers have, over time, inaccurately misapplied s98 confirms that the VEC’s training processes may have
selectively bolstered demand for early voting at Victorian state elections. This is a classic example demonstrating how external bodies – in this case, the legal system – might influence minor reform (Renwick 2010, p.22). It is quite remarkable that the Court of Disputed Returns adjudicated over what is essentially a technical amendment to Victoria’s voting legislation, given that most legal challenges to Australian electoral law have typically involved ‘big ticket’ items like the franchise, electoral enrolment and voting systems (major reforms).
Chapter Ten: Early voting at Victorian state elections, 2002-2014; quantitative analysis

This chapter is the final quantitative chapter in this thesis. Chapter Nine examined the institutionalisation of early voting at Victorian state elections via the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), and a later reform in 2005 which created an oral declaration for early voting in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic). As this chapter will show, the 2005 Bill coincided with a dramatic increase in early voting at Victorian state elections. This chapter presents the results from the voter turnout models for the 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections in response to the thesis’ second research question about the impact of early voting on voter turnout at Victorian state elections. This chapter regresses early voting against four Victorian state elections; the additional election in this chapter is included due to data available compared to federal and NSW state elections. Further, the aggregate-level models are complimented by individual-level observations from the 2010 Victorian state election electoral roll. Using this data the chapter performs a series of multinominal tests to estimate the probability of early voting using demographic descriptors in the data file. This is one of the only occasions a complete Australian electoral register has been used for research relating to early voting in Australia.

The chapter finds that early voting is negatively associated with tertiary education, like NSW, with less conclusive findings in relation to the employment variable. There is also evidence that the introduction of direct enrolment did not have the same effect on early voting as it did for federal elections, as demonstrated in Chapter Six. Further, the chapter also provides further evidence of a strong association between early voting and partisanship.

The chapter begins by reviewing descriptive statistics for the dependant variable – the rate of early voting in person at the 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections. After reviewing descriptive statistics for the independent variables in the four turnout models, the chapter then regresses early voting at the four Victorian state elections against the four models of voter turnout developed in Chapter Three, with three additional variables in the Electoral / Institutional model. It then proceeds to the multinominal tests, describing the data file and research technique. The chapter concludes with analysis and conclusions from the turnout models, and mixed-methods conclusions.
Early voting in Victoria – in numbers

General elections

As seen in Figure 10.1, Victoria has experienced a 400 percent increase in early voting in person since the 2002 Victorian state election. No other state or territory but the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has matched Victoria’s movement to early voting in person. At the 2002 Victorian state election early votes accounted for just six percent of total turnout (or 179,932 early votes); by 2010, early votes tripled to 18 percent of all votes cast (or 543,763 early votes), and in 2014 26 percent of all votes cast were early votes (or 912,967 early votes).

Figure 10.1: Turnout types, Victorian state elections, 1999-2014


Another useful way of understanding how early voting has increased in Victoria is at the Legislative Assembly District level. Referring to table 10.1, at the District level, there were 10 Districts at the 2014 Victorian state election where at least 40 percent of total votes, considered as the sum of early votes and postal votes, were cast before Election Day. While six of these 10 Districts are located in regional areas, four of the 10 – St Albans, Sunbury, South-Barwon and Niddrie – are located in metropolitan Melbourne or large towns (Sunbury) or cities (South-Barwon in Geelong). In the top 10 Districts, the average rate of early voting was 43.5 percent. In 56 of the 88 Legislative Assembly Districts 30 percent of electors voted before Election Day, an increase of 96 percent on the 2010 Victorian state election.
Table 10.1: Top 10 Victorian Legislative Assembly Districts, early voting, 2014 Victorian state election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total turnout percentage</th>
<th>Total postal votes percentage</th>
<th>Total early votes percentage</th>
<th>Early vote as percentage of turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South-West Coast</td>
<td>94.93</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>44.86</td>
<td>49.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovens Valley</td>
<td>93.67</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>43.84</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>94.37</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>39.03</td>
<td>45.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bendigo East</td>
<td>94.95</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>37.51</td>
<td>43.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niddrie</td>
<td>94.36</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>34.37</td>
<td>43.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Barwon</td>
<td>94.89</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildura</td>
<td>92.34</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>38.88</td>
<td>41.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendouree</td>
<td>94.19</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>34.75</td>
<td>41.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Albans</td>
<td>89.55</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>36.04</td>
<td>40.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunbury</td>
<td>93.92</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>33.45</td>
<td>40.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


By-elections

Recent Victorian state by-elections also demonstrate a marked increase in early voting behaviour. Compared to federal and NSW state elections, Figure 10.2 demonstrates a clear trend towards early voting. These state by-elections all took place in geographically diverse Districts, although the trend is strongest in rural and regional Victorian Districts, such as South-West Coast, which has two major population centres in Portland and Warrnambool and a history of establishing more than one early voting centre. Further, another perspective on increasing early voting at Victorian elections is the rate of early voting at equidistant District by-elections to turnout at a general election. Referring to Figure 10.3, we would expect early voting to be less popular at by-elections, if only because turnout tends to be lower at Victorian state by-elections (VEC 2015). However, at the Gippsland South District, Polwarth District and South-West Coast District by-elections in 2015, early voting increased slightly. There were no major administrative differences at the election, the same number of early voting centres and roughly the same number of candidates (VEC 2015).
Figure 10.2: Rates of early voting and postal voting at Victorian by-elections since 2000

Figure 10.3: Three District by-election comparison to 2014 Victorian state election, percentage


Descriptive statistics – dependent variable

Table 10.2 lists descriptive statistics for early voting at the four Victorian state elections in this thesis. In 2002 the mean number of early votes cast in a Legislative Assembly District was 1860.23. The maximum was 5733. By 2006, the mean number of early votes in a Legislative Assembly District was 3150.966, increasing again in 2010 to 6179.125 and in 2014 to 10374.591. Mean early voting in person in Victoria thus increased eightfold between 2002 and 2014. The maximum in 2014 of 19066 was also roughly equivalent to the average number of electors in the majority of Victorian Legislative Assembly Districts in 2002.

Skewness actually decreased between the 2002 and 2014 Victorian state elections, from 1.65 with a standard error of 0.257 at the 2002 Victorian state election compared to a skewness of 0.587 with a standard error of 0.257 at the 2014 Victorian state election. This supports what we see above: early voting ‘fanned out’ to the majority of electorates in 2014, whereas in 2002 and 2006 the majority of electorates reported a negative skewness, or fewer early votes than the mean.

Descriptive statistics – independent variables

Tables 10.3-10.6 list the descriptive statistics for the independent variables in the four models for the 2002-2014 Victorian state elections. Most of the variables display a slight positive skewness. As seen in Chapter Six, the turnout variable is also negatively skewed; 2002; -1.602, 2006; -2.223, 2010; -1.553, 2014; -1.346. These figures reflect the slight downward trend in Legislative Assembly turnout at Victorian state elections between 1999 and 2006; the 2006 Victorian state election had the lowest voter turnout of 92.73 percent for a Victorian state election. In this context we would expect to see a slight negative skewness. Further, the one-year address change is consistently positively skewed. These figures can be explained by Melbourne’s dramatic population growth in the past decade. According to the ABS Melbourne was the fastest growing city in Australia in 2014-2015, and prior to that, the second fast growing city after Perth for much of the 2000s (ABS 2015, p.2). Population growth in Melbourne’s outer regions has also been consistent; Cranbourne East in “Melbourne’s outer south-east increased by 4,600 people in 2014-15, the largest growth of any area in Australia. The outer northern areas of South Morang (up by 4,200 people) and Epping (3,300) came in second and third respectively, whilst Point Cook (3,200) in Melbourne’s outer west ranked fourth nationally” (ABS 2015, p.2). With both variables, the skewness is thus explainable and does not affect model outputs.
Table 10.2: Descriptive statistics, early voting, Victoria, 2002-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (standard error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2002 Victorian state election</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>5733</td>
<td>1860.23</td>
<td>877.986</td>
<td>1.635 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2006 Victorian state election</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1017</td>
<td>7508</td>
<td>3150.966</td>
<td>1198.7073</td>
<td>1.3 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010 Victorian state election</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>12806</td>
<td>6179.125</td>
<td>2223.2253</td>
<td>0.606 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014 Victorian state election</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early voting</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4144</td>
<td>19066</td>
<td>10374.591</td>
<td>2814.5443</td>
<td>0.587 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 10.3: 2002 Victorian state election Legislative Assembly Districts / 2001 ABS Census data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness (std. error in brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>16938</td>
<td>40404</td>
<td>23777.61</td>
<td>5212.189</td>
<td>1.338 (0.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4974.0</td>
<td>46462.0</td>
<td>15432.896</td>
<td>8356.9605</td>
<td>1.217 (0.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different address</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4395</td>
<td>23153</td>
<td>8353.93</td>
<td>3120.559</td>
<td>2.472 (0.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-year prior to Census</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.6696</td>
<td>4596.2790</td>
<td>1230.5345</td>
<td>1145.8190</td>
<td>0.574 (0.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>194.00</td>
<td>25.3823</td>
<td>25.26751</td>
<td>3.582 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>71.00</td>
<td>40.0095</td>
<td>13.7830</td>
<td>-0.034 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness between 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1308.00</td>
<td>383.773</td>
<td>316.5367</td>
<td>.937 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early vote centre count</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>4.227</td>
<td>1.0799</td>
<td>1.044 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>33253</td>
<td>40115</td>
<td>36584.44</td>
<td>1582.132</td>
<td>.026 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>86.61</td>
<td>95.61</td>
<td>93.1403</td>
<td>1.76850</td>
<td>-1.602 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal rate</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>3.4314</td>
<td>1.00704</td>
<td>1.441 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of early voting centres per District</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td>.8582</td>
<td>1.093 (0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: In 2002 the Community Profiles for Victoria’s Legislative Assembly Districts did not offer tables for the tertiary education variable. This was broached with the ABS, which suggested a data collection anomaly related to the timing of Victoria’s 2001 electoral redistribution and the 2001 ABS Census of Population and Housing. This anomaly was detected during the data collection phase but it was nonetheless decided to proceed given that only one election of the 10 general elections in this thesis was affected.
Table 10.4: 2006 Victorian state election Legislative Assembly Districts / 2006 ABS Census data

N
Minimum
Maximum
Mean
Std. Deviation
Skew (std. error in brackets)
Employment
88
17230
38658
25817.27
4087.947
.907
(0.257)
Tertiary qualifications
88
4383
29656
11056.14
5460.226
1.311
(0.257)
Born overseas
88
2565
30571
13312.49
7152.946
.507
(0.257)
Different address 1-year
88
4258
22596
7627.94
2526.604
3.097
(0.257)
prior to Census
Population density
88
2
4597
1237.01
1143.513
.644
(0.258)
Closeness 2CP
88
.08
63.79
21.7749
15.76788
.820
(0.257)
Closeness 1st and 3rd cand.
88
19.11
67.46
38.4809
10.07063
.257
(0.257)
Closeness 2CP early vote
88
5.0
2773.0
563.682
510.1934
1.898
(0.257)
centre count
No. of candidates
88
3
8
5.19
1.015
.476
(0.257)
Enrolment
88
33398
46060
38111.88
2452.337
.878
(0.257)
Turnout
88
84.84
94.78
92.7350
2.12312
-2.223
(0.257)
Informal rate
88
2.58
8.51
4.5712
1.30639
1.124
(0.257)
No. of early voting centres
88
0
3
.83
.629
.711
(0.257)
per District
Valid N (listwise)
88
Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, 2006 Census (all 88 Legislative Assembly Districts where relevant
data available), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra. Accessed August 2015 from
“Virtual Tally Room”, Victorian Electoral Commission, Melbourne, August 2015; Victorian Electoral Commission, “Report to

Table 10.5: 2010 Victorian state election Legislative Assembly Districts / 2011 ABS Census data

N
Minimum
Maximum
Mean
Std, Deviation
Skew (std. error in brackets)
Employment
88
18928
42052
28547.78
4094.782
.566
(0.257)
Tertiary qualifications
88
7089
37739
15141.74
6925.266
.970
(0.281)
Born overseas
88
3798
41890
16526.80
9322.712
.738
(0.257)
Different address 1-year
88
4219
26535
8345.57
3279.333
2.663
(0.257)
prior to Census
Population density
88
1.5000
5205.4000
1245.6632
1206.1745
.825
(0.257)
Closeness 2CP
88
.83
58.66
21.3399
14.61719
.263
(0.257)
Closeness 1st and 3rd cand.
88
7.71
70.53
39.4450
10.84021
-.281
(0.257)
Closeness 2CP early vote
88
2.0
4110.0
1277.955
1007.6947
.758
(0.257)
centre count
No. of candidates
88
3.0
10.0
5.648
1.4781
.611
(0.257)
Enrolment
88
33073.0
54134.0
40708.205
4328.2834
1.126
(0.257)
Turnout
88
87
95
92.91
1.651
-1.554
(0.258)
Informal rate
88
2.94
37.49
5.2941
3.69154
2.797
(0.257)
No. of early voting centres
88
1
3
1.11
.413
3.798
(0.257)
per District
Valid N (listwise)
88
Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, 2011 Census (all 88 Legislative Assembly Districts where relevant
data available), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra. Accessed August 2015 from
“Virtual Tally Room”, Victorian Electoral Commission, Melbourne, August 2015; Victorian Electoral Commission, “Report to

Table 10.6: 2014 Victorian state election Legislative Assembly Districts / 2011 ABS Census data

N
Minimum
Maximum
Mean
Std. Deviation
Skew (std. error in brackets)
Employment
88
20654
42052
28728.55
3616.065
.665
(0.257)
Tertiary qualifications
88
7089
37739
14431.75
6601.581
1.161
(0.257)
Born overseas
88
3798
37618
15944.18
8868.255
.585
(0.257)
Different address 1-year
88
4219
26535
8566.86
3479.783
2.556
(0.281)
prior to Census
Population density
88
1.5
5205.4
1238.007
1208.4704
.832
(0.257)
Closeness 2CP
88
.73
56.86
18.3835
12.49298
.823
(0.257)
Closeness 1st and 3rd cand.
88
.74
60.71
37.5273
11.01567
-.854
(0.257)
Closeness 2CP early vote
88
26.0
5623.0
1835.443
1427.3717
.973
(0.257)
No. of candidates
88
3.0
14.0
6.193
1.8561
1.057
(0.257)
Enrolment
88
38834.0
48044.0
43253.080
2082.5507
.062
(0.257)
Turnout
88
87.54
95.38
93.0264
1.72054
-1.346
(0.257)
Informal rate
88
3.47
8.88
5.2206
1.24103
.935
(0.257)
Informal – apparently
88
8.18
34.39
19.0348
5.29787
.377
(0.257)
deliberate
Informal – apparently
88
33.49
68.32
49.5525
6.07801
.062
(0.257)
deliberate including blank
88
31.2
58.9
46.3342
5.1250
.055
(0.257)
Informal – preference ind.
88
1
4
1.21
.411
3.114
(0.257)
No of early voting centres
Valid N (listwise)
88
Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Community Profiles, 2011 Census (all 88 Legislative Assembly Districts where relevant
Commission, “Virtual Tally Room”, Victorian Electoral Commission, Melbourne, August 2015; Victorian Electoral Commission,

245


Data treatment and results

As in Chapters Six and Eight, OLS regressions were used to estimate District-level associations between early voting at Victorian state elections from 2002 to 2014 and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary qualifications in the Resources model of voter turnout. As for Chapters Six and Eight, the results of the multivariate analysis are presented per model in tables 10.8 to 10.11. The dependent variable is the raw number of early votes in each of the 88 Victorian Legislative Assembly Districts for the 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections. This data is regressed by each of four turnout models developed in Chapter Three.

This chapter also adds three additional variables in the Electoral / Institutional model based on data from the VEC’s informal voting surveys at the 2014 Victorian state election (VEC 2015, p.p.90-100). Table 10.7 lists the 16 variables in this chapter. Since the 2010 Victorian state election the VEC has conducted an informal ballot paper survey, releasing statistics about the types of informal ballots at Victorian state elections. In 2015 this data was published for the first time by District in the VEC’s report on the 2014 Victorian state election. The additional variables in this chapter are variable 14; the number of informal votes – apparently deliberate; variable 15; the number of informal votes – apparently deliberate including blank vote and variable 16; the number of informal votes – preference indicated. The categories are fairly easy to explain. Variable 14 is the number of informal votes that were spoilt deliberately either by a message alongside a single preference (at Victorian state elections electors must mark all preferences on the Legislative Assembly ballot paper from numbers ‘1’ through to the final preference, in their order of choice).Variable 15 extends this to measure apparently deliberate informal votes that were left blank. Variable 16 is the number of informal votes that had a preference indicated but were informal – these voters are considered to have attempted to vote but failed to complete the ballot paper in accordance with formality. Variables 14 to 16 are numerical variables expressed as a percentage of that type of informal vote.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Variable measurement</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early voting in person</td>
<td>Raw number of early votes in person, as sourced from relevant VEC’s Virtual Tally Room.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Variable measurement</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a) Resources model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Employment</td>
<td>Number of adult male and females employed in the District at the SED level, based on relevant Census.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>Number of people who hold tertiary qualifications in the District at the SED level.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b) Social-Cultural model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Born overseas</td>
<td>Number of people born overseas in the District at the SED level, based on relevant Census.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level of one-year population stability</td>
<td>Number of people who changed address one-year prior to the relevant Census in the District at the SED level.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Population density</td>
<td>Number of people per square kilometre in District based on the relevant Census and SED data.</td>
<td>Based on ABS data, Community Profiles, State Electoral District (SED).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c) Political model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Closeness between two-candidate (2CP) preferred candidates</td>
<td>Two-candidate preferred count is a distribution of preferences to the two candidates who are expected to come first and second in the election. Usually, but not always, these will be the candidates representing the ALP and the Liberal or National Parties. Closeness is raw number of votes.</td>
<td>This service is provided by Australian electoral commissions as a courtesy to parties and candidates. It is usually given to media outlets for reports on results on Election Night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Closeness between first and third candidate</td>
<td>The raw vote difference between the first candidate and third candidate in the 2CP count.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Closeness between 2CP count, early voting centre counts.</td>
<td>The raw vote difference between the two candidates in the 2CP counts conducted at early voting centres.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Number of candidates standing for election in electoral District or Division</td>
<td>The number of candidates standing for election.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d) Electoral / inst. model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Enrolment</td>
<td>Total number of enrolled people in each District. Data sourced from the VEC’s Virtual Tally Room.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Turnout</td>
<td>The total number of eligible electors who voted divided by the total number of eligible electors in District.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Informal</td>
<td>Informal votes are those which are not completed according to the parameters set out in electoral legislation. Total informal votes in District.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. No. of early voting centres</td>
<td>The number of early voting centres per District as determined by the NSW Electoral Commission.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Informal voting – apparently deliberate</td>
<td>Figures obtained from VEC’s report to Parliament on the 2014 Victorian state election.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Informal voting – apparently deliberate including blank</td>
<td>Figures obtained from VEC’s report to Parliament on the 2014 Victorian state election.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Informal voting – preference indicated</td>
<td>Figures obtained from VEC’s report to Parliament on the 2014 Victorian state election.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rationale for including these variables is to provide some additional insights into the impact of informal voting on early voting at Victorian state elections. As demonstrated in Chapter Eight, informal voting was strongly negatively associated with early voting at NSW state elections throughout the three-election cycle, particularly at the 2015 NSW state election (Beta -0.551, p < .001). By including the VEC’s survey data we will be able to assess if a relationship exists between early voting and the Electoral / Institutional model and to what extent informal voting – and what type of informal voting – might be related to early voting.

Resource model

Referring to table 10.8, although socio-economic variables did not explain much of the variance in early voting at the 2002 and 2006 Victorian state elections, the 2010 and 2014 Victorian state elections demonstrated a strong relationship between the Resources model and early voting. In 2010 14 percent of the variance in early voting at the District level was explained by the Resources model. Specifically, employment was positively associated with early voting (Beta 0.351, p < .05) and tertiary qualifications strongly negatively associated with early voting (Beta -0.558, p < .001). Early voting was positively associated with employment at the 2010 Victorian state election (Beta 0.351, p < 05) whereas tertiary qualifications was strongly negatively associated with early voting (Beta -0.551, p < .001). In 2014 these relationships strengthened. The \( R^2 \) for the Resources model in 2014 was 0.200, with employment (Beta 0.383, p < .01) positively associated and tertiary qualifications (Beta -0.636, p < .001) strongly negatively associated with early voting. As for NSW state elections, these findings suggest that the Resources model is a strong tool for explaining early voting at Victorian state elections. We can say that, in 2014, for every one-unit increase in employment in a Legislative Assembly District, early voting increased by 0.383, or approximately 271 votes based on the unstandardised coefficient. For every one-unit decrease in tertiary qualifications, early voting decreased by -0.636, or approximately 246 votes based on the unstandardised coefficient.

Social-Cultural model

Referring to table 10.9, controlling for the two Resources model variables, we see that there is some continuity in the effect of employment and tertiary qualifications on early voting at Victorian state elections. In 2002 and 2006 the Resources variables are not statistically
significant, as for the Resources model. However, the social-cultural variables included in this model explain up to 25 percent of the variance in early voting in 2002 and 2006. In 2002 the number of people born overseas in a Legislative Assembly District was strongly negatively associated with early voting (Beta -0.485, p < .01). The level of one-year population stability was also strongly positively associated with early voting in 2002 (Beta 0.602, p < .001) but less so in 2006 (Beta 0.288, p < .01). Further, it is interesting to note that there is a negative relationship between population density and early voting in 2006 (Beta -0.361, p < .05) and 2010 (Beta 0.498, p. < .05). This indicates that early voting was more likely in Districts with a more dispersed population – semi rural and rural Districts – than metropolitan Districts. Moreover, the social-cultural variables offer more convincing explanations for variations in the independent variable in 2002 (R²=0.253) and 2006 (R²=0.187) relative to the Resources model in both years. This suggests that the Resources model is less convincing in the first two Victorian elections in this thesis. By 2014 however, the combined Resources / Social-Cultural model explains 0.274 of the variance in early voting turnout – tertiary qualifications is again negatively associated with early voting (Beta -0.466, p < .01), as are the numbers of people born overseas (Beta -0.258, p < .01). One-year population stability remains positively associated with early voting (Beta 0.277, p < .01), indicating that Districts with high levels of short-term population migration may have higher levels of early voting.

**Political model**

In table 10.10, the Political model explained 58 percent of the variance in early voting across the four Victorian state elections. As for federal and NSW state elections, two particular variables are strongly associated throughout the four-election cycle; closeness between 2CP general count and closeness between the 2CP early voting centre count. Introducing political variables explains a further 25 percent of the variance in early voting in 2002 (R²=0.588) and 2006 (R²=0.569) compared to the Social-Cultural model incorporating socio-economic variables.

Of the two statistically significant political variables, the closeness 2CP in the general count is negatively associated with early voting while the closeness 2CP early vote count is positively associated with early voting. For the closeness 2CP early voting centre count, all four elections saw a standardised coefficient of at least 0.65, with 2006 (Beta 0.862, p < 0.001), 2010 (Beta 0.744, p < .001) and 2014 (Beta 0.798, p < .001) higher than the general
count standardised coefficient and positively associated with early voting. In other words, for every one-unit increase in the closeness 2CP at the early voting centre in a Legislative Assembly District in 2010, for example, there was a 0.744 increase in early voting or 1585 extra early votes in a District based on the unstandardised coefficient. As demonstrated in Chapter Six and Eight, this evidence may suggest over the past three election cycles that partisan contests, or District-level contests where there is a substantial gap between the first and second candidates in the 2CP count, are likely to be Districts with high levels of early voting.

Despite this, controlling for social-cultural and political variables, tertiary education and one-year address change remain firm predictors of early voting. While the effects for one-year address change are only statistically significant in 2002 (Beta 0.301, p < .05) and 2006 (Beta 0.388, p < .05), and tertiary qualifications in 2014 only (Beta -0.39, p < .05) in this three-tiered model controlling for Social-Cultural and Political models, tertiary qualifications remain slightly negatively associated with early voting from 2002 to 2010, and one-year address change remains positively associated in 2010 (Beta 0.195) and 2014 (Beta 0.231).

**Electoral / Institutional model**

Evidence from table 10.11 demonstrates mixed results. There was a strong positive association between the number of early voting centres in a Legislative Assembly District in 2002 (Beta 0.229, p < .01) and 2006 (0.218, p < .01). In 2006 there was also a positive relationship between the level of electoral enrolment in a District (measured as the number of eligible electors enrolled to vote) and early voting (Beta 0.233, p < .05). It is possible – but we cannot prove – that this positive association at the 2002 and 2006 Victorian state elections at the aggregate level may be related to the institutionalisation of the practice of early voting in Victoria due to legislative changes to the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic), and the introduction of the oral declaration in 2006 through the *Electoral Amendment (Further Amendment) Bill 2005* (Vic).

The second caveat / observation of note from the electoral institutional variables relates to inter-effects between certain types of informal voting and early voting at the 2014 Victorian state election. Due to the limitations of this dataset only being available for 2014, we cannot extrapolate these observations too widely. However, in 2014 two types of informal voting had statistically significant effects on early voting; informal votes that were apparently deliberate, and those that were apparently deliberate because they were left blank or
unmarked. Apparently deliberate informal votes were positively associated with early voting (Beta 0.358, p < .01), while apparently deliberate blank informal votes were negatively associated with early voting. In other words, for every one-unit increase in deliberate informal voting – where an elector had ostensibly, according to the VEC, deliberately spoilt their ballot – in a Legislative Assembly District at the 2014 Victorian state election, there were 191.694 extra early votes in a District based on the unstandardised coefficient. Conversely, early voting was negatively associated with Districts with a high incidence of ballot papers deliberately left blank.

Further, in this Electoral / Institutional model political factors continue to be strongly associated with early voting. Closeness of the 2CP in the general count remained negatively associated with early voting at all four elections, with closeness 2CP in the early voting centre counts positively associated with early voting. In addition, employment remained positively associated with early voting in 2014 although the relationship is not statistically significant. In 2006 it was also statistically negatively related with early voting (Beta -0.258, p < .05), suggesting that early voting may have occurred in Districts with lower levels of employment. Tertiary qualifications were also negatively associated with early voting in 2014 (Beta –0.575, p < .05).
### Table 10.8: Early voting at 2002-2014 Victorian state elections regressed by Resources model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2370.908</td>
<td>427.789</td>
<td></td>
<td>2546.943</td>
<td>820.768</td>
<td></td>
<td>3139.494</td>
<td>1910.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-0.164</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>-0.179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R², standard error in brackets

- 0.012 (744.408)
- 0.003 (1171.0084)
- 0.148 (1853.5661)
- 0.200 (2393.3446)

*Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

### Table 10.9: Early voting at 2002-2014 Victorian state elections regressed by Social-Cultural model (incorporating Resources model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2428.329</td>
<td>406.787</td>
<td></td>
<td>3144.266</td>
<td>753.322</td>
<td></td>
<td>3295.678</td>
<td>1944.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources model variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>-0.317</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-Cultural variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>-0.485**</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.256</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.602***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.288*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.371</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>-0.361*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R², standard error in brackets

- 0.253 (647.124)
- 0.187 (1057.7435)
- 0.276 (1709.0556)
- 0.274 (2280.8871)

*Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
Table 10.10: Early voting at 2002-2014 Victorian state elections regressed by Political model (incorporating Resources and Social-Cultural models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2211.789</td>
<td>544.704</td>
<td></td>
<td>1400.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources model variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-0.205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-Cultural variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.301*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>-0.146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political model variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 - Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>-23.633</td>
<td>5.235</td>
<td>-0.522***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 - Closeness 2CP 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>-1.324</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 - Closeness 2CP early voting centre count</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.68***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 - No. of candidates</td>
<td>-7.332</td>
<td>68.201</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R², standard error in brackets</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>0.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: Significance measured at * p &lt; .05, ** p &lt; .01, *** p &lt; .001.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10.11: Early voting at 2002-2014 Victorian state elections regressed by Electoral/Institutional model (incorporating Resources, Social-Cultural and Political models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>693.147</td>
<td>7089.858</td>
<td></td>
<td>-7219.565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 - Employment</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>-0.118</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 - Tertiary qualifications</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-cultural model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 - Born overseas</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.147</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 - Different address 1-year</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 - Population density</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>-0.133</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 - Closeness 2CP</td>
<td>-21.871</td>
<td>5.671</td>
<td>-0.483***</td>
<td>-58.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 - Closeness 2CP 1st and 3rd candidate</td>
<td>-2.162</td>
<td>6.616</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>12.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 - Closeness 2CP early voting centre count</td>
<td>1.592</td>
<td>0.245</td>
<td>0.664***</td>
<td>2.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V9 - No. of candidates</td>
<td>-18.264</td>
<td>71.631</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>75.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral / Institutional model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V10 - Enrolment</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>0.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V11 – Turnout</td>
<td>-8.923</td>
<td>74.385</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>54.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V12 – Informal</td>
<td>9.846</td>
<td>133.899</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>226.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V13 - No. of early voting centres</td>
<td>199.543</td>
<td>78.744</td>
<td>0.229**</td>
<td>403.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014 only</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V14 - Informal - apparently deliberate</td>
<td>191.694</td>
<td>67.476</td>
<td>0.358**</td>
<td>191.694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V15 - Informal - apparently deliberate including blank</td>
<td>-194.934</td>
<td>67.801</td>
<td>-0.437**</td>
<td>-194.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V16 - Informal - preference indicated</td>
<td>-67.797</td>
<td>49.847</td>
<td>-0.159</td>
<td>-67.797</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R2, std. error in brackets: 0.617 (463.413) 0.619 (723.4332) 0.458 (1478.1435) 0.506 (1880.8374)

Note: Significance measured at * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
2010 and 2014 Victorian elections – electoral roll observations

As discussed in Chapter Four, as part of this thesis the VEC provided a complete, de-identified data log of the electoral roll for the 2010 Victorian state election. This is potentially the first time that an Australian electoral commission has released an entire electoral roll for research purposes; accordingly, this section of the thesis makes an important and original contribution to the Australian electoral studies literature by offering individual-level insights into early voting behaviour to complement the thesis’ aggregate-level findings.

Method and descriptive statistics

The election data file is a near complete log file (99.8 percent) of the 2010 Victorian state electoral roll. The electoral roll is different to the electoral register; in all Australian jurisdictions the roll is produced when the writ for an election is received by the Governor. The roll extract is derived from the VEC’s election management system. The original data file featured seven variables. These were:

- Home District: The elector’s Home District;
- Vote District: The District where the elector’s vote was cast;
- Vote Centre: the voting centre where the vote was cast;
- Sex;
- Date of birth;
- Date of vote; and
- Time of vote.

The data file captured 3,292,825 electors, representing 100 percent of the VEC’s official turnout figures for the election. Of this figure, 558,849 votes were early votes, 198,720 were absent votes or votes cast outside the elector’s Home District, and 244,796 votes were postal votes.

With a four-outcome variable there were a range of statistical tests that could potentially be used to investigate the thesis’ first research question as to what impact early voting has had on voter turnout at Victorian state elections. Nevertheless, the decision around methodology was influenced by usage restrictions requested by the VEC regarding the data file. The file was provided on the basis that the data was not altered or distributed in any substantial way, including merging or de-merging the information with additional electoral indicators.
Accordingly, it was decided that the most logical test would involve assessing the probability of early voting, using the two demographic variables in the data file – age and sex – relative to other types of voting. Voting was thus conceptualised as a multi-level choice between absent voting, postal voting and early voting – ordinary voting was excluded from the data due to the incomplete nature of the ordinary vote category relating to date of birth. Based on this, multiple logistic regression was used. Multinomial logistic regression (often just called multinomial regression) is used to predict a nominal dependent variable given one or more independent variables. It is a variant of binomial logistic regression which allows for a dependent variable with more than two categories. As with other types of regression, multinomial logistic regression can have nominal and/or continuous independent variables and uses interactions between independent variables to predict the dependent variable.

Independent variables were recoded to assist with categorisation. Besides recoding the vote type variable into a multinominal choice – provision voting “1”, early voting “2”, absentee voting “3” and postal voting “4” – date of birth was recoded into an age cohort variable. Categories corresponded to the ABS’s age cohort categories for statistical analysis. The recoded time of vote variable was split into four reference categories; 8am-10am “1”, 11am-1pm “2”, 2pm-4pm “3” and 5pm onwards “4”. The reasoning for these categories was to attempt to capture the morning, lunchtime, afternoon and end-of-day periods associated with the average work day defined by the ABS, focusing specifically on the early voting period, as well as vote patterns highlighted by the AEC (AEC 2014, p.4). The one-hour periods in between the reference groups are not included so as to extenuate the effect of voting in the defined periods. Finally, date of vote was also recoded into one of the 12 days in the early voting period.

Using these recoded variables, the chapter also presents cross-tabulations showing frequencies of voting by vote type for different age cohorts as defined by the ABS. The chapter also presents information about the time of early votes, and day of early votes, at the 2010 Victorian state election.

Results

Multinominal parameter estimates

Referring to table 10.12 and Figures 10.4 and 10.5, multinominal regression parameter estimates are reported first. The outcome measure is the relative likelihood of an elector in
one of the eight age cohorts voting early relative to provisional voting as the reference category. We are particularly interested in the standardised coefficients (B), not the Exp. (B) log odds.

Compared to provisional voting, younger cohorts were less likely to vote early relative to those aged 55 and above. While we can see that older cohorts were more likely to vote early, the results are less certain than the absent and postal voting coefficients, with statistically significant coefficients indicating a negative relationship between early voting and younger cohorts relative to provisional voting. For instance, for the 18-24 cohort the multi-nominal logit estimate for a one-unit increase in early voting relative to provisional voting given the other age cohorts are held constant was -0.836 (p < .001), the largest coefficient in the output. However, both the 45-54 (Beta -0.176) and 55-64 (Beta 0.233) cohorts reported statistically insignificant results, with only the 65-74 cohort reporting a positive coefficient of 0.44 (p < .001). That the model breaks down at this point makes further interpretation problematic.

Compared to provisional voting, with postal voting we see similar results to early voting. For the 18-24 cohort the multi-nominal logit estimate for a one-unit increase in postal voting relative to provisional voting given the other age cohorts are held constant was -2.434 (p < .001), the largest coefficient effect in the output. So while postal voting was less likely than absent voting, we can see that relative to early voting postal voting was less likely in younger cohorts in 2010.

Overall, the model fit for this logit is strong, reflecting the high number of observations in the dataset. Although logistic regression does not report R² like OLS regression, the pseudo R² score using the Cox and Snell method is 0.560.

Cross tabulations – time of vote and day of vote

The chapter now reports the results of early voting cross-tabulated with the two recoded temporal variables, time of vote and day of vote.

Referring to Figure 10.6, at the 2010 Victorian state election, the majority of early voters voting in the two-week early voting period cast their ballot between 11am and 1pm. Of the 559,548 electors who voted early at the 2010 Victorian state election, 267,101, or 48 percent,

43 Why include postal voting now, given it is not part of the thesis? The coefficients principally support the overall finding from the multinominal model – that older age cohorts were more likely to vote early and via post relative to younger age cohorts at the 2010 Victorian state election. The coefficients for postal voting are more statistically reliable than the early voting coefficients, but nonetheless demonstrate the same trend.
voted between 11am and 1pm. This figure is considerably larger than the two adjacent time periods; for 8am-10am 134,754 people or 24 percent of early voters voted, for 2pm-4pm, 150,471 people or 26 percent of early voters voted. These results demonstrate that most early votes at the 2010 Victorian state election were cast during the traditional ‘lunchbreak’ period in the middle of the working day, as defined by the ABS.

Further, referring to Figure 10.7, at the 2010 Victorian state election, 51 percent of all early votes were cast in the final three days of the early voting period, from Wednesday 24 November to Friday 26 November 2010. Specifically, 73,380 votes were cast on Wednesday 24 November, or 13 percent of early votes, 95,943 or 17 percent of early votes on Thursday 25 November, and 113,354 votes or 20 percent of early votes on Friday 26 November. Put another way, over a third of early votes were cast in the final two days of the 2010 Victorian state election early voting period, with a substantial number of these votes cast during the 11am-1pm time period.

Referring to table 10.14, these turnout trends were also seen at the 2014 Victorian state election. Thirty-three percent of total early votes, or 296,657 votes, were cast in the final three days of the early voting period from Wednesday 26 November to Friday 28 November 2014.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote type</th>
<th>Age cohort</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absent voting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.186</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>309.418***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.468</td>
<td>6.541</td>
<td>8.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.136</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>263.187***</td>
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<td>10.658</td>
<td>8.254</td>
<td>13.763</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.13</td>
<td>329.035***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.928</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>10.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>248.767***</td>
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<td>6.904</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>8.959</td>
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<td>211.235***</td>
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<td>4.534</td>
<td>3.407</td>
<td>6.034</td>
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<td>1.914</td>
<td>0.137</td>
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<td>6.782</td>
<td>5.185</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
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<td>1.512</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>107.413***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.391</td>
<td>3.474</td>
<td>5.414</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>32.765***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.422</td>
<td>1.789</td>
<td>3.279</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early voting</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.551</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>2210.186***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.433</td>
<td>0.339</td>
<td>0.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.836</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>44.198***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.489</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>0.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.716</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>33.089***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>0.462</td>
<td>0.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.526</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>17.625***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>1.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>1.913</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>1.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>3.154</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.262</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>1.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>9.869**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.553</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-84</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>4.607*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.375</td>
<td>1.028</td>
<td>1.839</td>
</tr>
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<td>85+</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postal voting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.764</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>2384.707***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
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<td>-2.432</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>372.905***</td>
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<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
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<td>-1.991</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>255.425***</td>
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<td>0.247</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>0.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.633</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>169.652***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>0.303</td>
<td>0.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.399</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>121.284***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>0.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.937</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>51.019***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.556</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>15.745***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-84</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>0.196</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85+</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Reference category – provisional voting.
Figure 10.4: Multinominal regression parameter estimates, age by cohort, early voting in person compared to provisional voting, 2010 Victorian state election

Figure 10.5: Multinominal regression parameter estimates, age by cohort, early voting in person compared to postal voting, 2010 Victorian state election
**Table 10.13: Cross tabulation of vote type by age cohort, 2010 Victorian state election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age cohort</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65-74</th>
<th>75-84</th>
<th>85, or age indeter.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>40,406</td>
<td>61,108</td>
<td>40,161</td>
<td>28,090</td>
<td>18,536</td>
<td>7,104</td>
<td>2,674</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>198,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>59,817</td>
<td>81,032</td>
<td>86,585</td>
<td>98,735</td>
<td>99,816</td>
<td>70,401</td>
<td>43,919</td>
<td>18,544</td>
<td>558,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marked</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>17,778</td>
<td>37,279</td>
<td>40,702</td>
<td>37,059</td>
<td>32,561</td>
<td>21,450</td>
<td>11,564</td>
<td>2,131,269</td>
<td>2,287,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal</td>
<td>15,002</td>
<td>28,021</td>
<td>35,419</td>
<td>35,929</td>
<td>38,321</td>
<td>32,158</td>
<td>37,003</td>
<td>22,943</td>
<td>244,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13,3563</td>
<td>208,117</td>
<td>203,460</td>
<td>200,292</td>
<td>189,547</td>
<td>131,290</td>
<td>95,287</td>
<td>2,131,269</td>
<td>3,292,825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Victorian Electoral Commission, “2010 Victorian state electoral roll data file”, provided by Glenda Fraser, Prosecution Officer and Manager, Election Services, 30 July 2014.*

*Note: 2,131,269 under the 85+ or indeterminate column relates to the number of ordinary, or Election Day, votes that were recorded on the day, not for the 85+ category. This is a limitation of the data file due to some Election Day voting centres in 2010 employing the VEC’s electronic roll mark off devices – these are basically tablets connected to a private VEC network against which election staff mark off a person who has presented to vote. The reason we have the detailed early voting data in 2010 in this file is due to roll mark off, in that the data file extract contains the elector’s name, address, DOB and several other demographic indicators, such as sex. However, there was no method to recode or treat the ordinary vote variable based on age as there was no information to back fill. Accordingly, it is listed in the indeterminate column. Further, using paper rolls on Election Day, the VEC did not at the time of providing the data file commence scanning the rolls into their election management system until a month or so after the election. Due to this the VEC was only able to provide a non-paper roll data file as they were unsure as to whether the alternative file was comprised of all scanned paper roll records.*

**Figure 10.6: Cross tabulation - time of early vote (recoded), 2010 Victorian state election**

![Graph showing early vote distribution by time period](image-url)
Table 10.14: Electronic roll mark off statistics, 2014 Victorian state election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Early votes issued</th>
<th>Percentage of total early votes with electronic roll mark off</th>
<th>Progressive early vote count</th>
<th>Percentage of total electronically issued votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14/11/2014</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11/2014</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/11/2014</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/11/2014</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>30,287</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>30,353</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/11/2014</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>41,116</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>71,469</td>
<td>8.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/11/2014</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>48,237</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>119,706</td>
<td>13.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/11/2014</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>50,720</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>298,884</td>
<td>33.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/11/2014</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>1,073</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>299,957</td>
<td>33.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/11/2014</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>78,223</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>378,185</td>
<td>42.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/11/2014</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>99,956</td>
<td>11.28</td>
<td>477,781</td>
<td>54.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/11/2014</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>154,286</td>
<td>17.48</td>
<td>740,221</td>
<td>83.37</td>
</tr>
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<td>28/11/2014</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>142,371</td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>882,592</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis and conclusions

While early voting has increased considerably since 2002 at federal and NSW elections, the growth of early voting at Victorian state elections has been far more dramatic. This chapter charts this electoral trend at the past four Victorian state elections, presenting for the first time in the Australian electoral literature statistics on early voting at Victorian state elections, by-elections and multivariate models estimating District-level associations between early voting and the socio-economic variables of employment and tertiary education. At a time of declining turnout in Australia, early voting turnout in Victoria is clearly bucking the trend.

In general, results from four voter turnout models for Victoria support the central hypothesis attached to the thesis’ second research question that early voting at Victorian state elections was associated with Districts with lower levels of socio-economic resources. Throughout the four-election cycle the chapter found a consistently negative District level relationship between early voting and tertiary education. This effect was estimated across all four models, controlling for the introduction of social-cultural, political and electoral / institutional variables. These findings support newer developments in the US-based convenience voting literature about the stimulative effect of early voting reforms, as recently theorised by Alvarez et al (2012), Gronke and Stewart (2013, p.p-1-13). However, it is difficult to link these findings to US practice given the effect of compulsion. Further, it is also difficult to link these findings causally to the Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic) and the oral declaration.

In contrast to Chapter Six, this chapter demonstrated that the positive association between early voting, one-year address change and tertiary education at the 2010 federal election (and a slightly weaker combined effect at the 2013 federal election), is more difficult to interpret. Address-change is not statistically associated with early voting when controlling for political and electoral / institutional variables after 2010; the year that the Parliament of Victoria passed direct enrolment legislation. The number of people born overseas is also consistently negatively associated with early voting in all four models, and tertiary education at the 2014 Victorian state election was strongly negatively associated with early voting.

What can conclude from this? It is plausible that early voting was more likely in Victoria over the four elections in Districts with lower socio-economic profiles, but that these Districts were likely to be relatively ethnically homogenous due to a lower number of people born overseas. Whereas direct enrolment may have picked up electors in gentrified areas at federal
elections, this effect is not evident in Victoria from the aggregate data. The 2010 Victorian state electoral roll data provide further support for this finding. The cross-tabulations demonstrated that early voting was most likely in the final three days of the 2010 Victorian state election early voting period during the traditional lunch break. In addition, the logit analysis demonstrated that, as a relative choice, older age cohorts (55-64, 65-74) in 2010 were more likely to vote early than younger age cohorts, who were more likely to vote absent as a relative choice to provisional voting. While we cannot causally link the liberalisation of Victoria’s early voting procedures in 2005 to these findings, there is enough evidence here to suggest that direct enrolment did not have the same effect on early voting at Victorian state elections as it did at federal elections. This marries up well with what is known about the VEC’s direct enrolment program; in contrast to the AEC, it adopted a cautious approach to directly enrolling electors in 2010-2011, choosing to trial the initiative with students registered with the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority and born in Victoria (VEC 2011).

Finally, findings in this chapter from the Political model round off a remarkably stable pattern in this thesis; a strong positive relationship between early voting and electoral Divisions or Districts where there was a large gap between the first and second candidates in the 2CP early voting centre count. Closeness of the 2CP early voting centre count alone explained at least 12 percent of the variation in early voting at the 2002 and 2006 Victorian state elections. In this chapter, the Electoral / Institutional model also shows a positive relationship between early voting and apparently deliberate informal voting, and a negative association with blank ballots. Early voting in 2014 was thus more likely in Districts with a large gap between the two candidates at the early voting centre count, and in Districts with less than mean blank ballots but higher than mean apparently deliberate ballots. This interactive finding between early voting and spoilt ballot choice is a new contribution to the Australian electoral literature that certainly requires further investigation at the individual level.

**Chapters Nine and Ten – mixed methods observations**

Merging the findings from the qualitative and quantitative work, the chapter also offers the following observations.

Referring to the statistically significant positive association in the Electoral / Institutional model between the number of early voting centres in a District and early voting, this may
indicate a link between the VEC’s administration of early voting centres and take up of early voting following Victoria’s overhaul of its electoral legislation in 2002. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, Fullmer’s (2013) research demonstrates that site density is positively related to voter turnout in the US context. Given that there were fewer early voting centres in 2006 compared to 2002, it is plausible that many early voters came from outside the District to vote, or were informed enough to realise that this voting option was available. Polling place convenience thus affected turnout in 2006, supporting Fullmer’s findings (2013) about early voting sites and turnout in the US context.

Nevertheless, findings in Chapters Nine and Ten do not directly confirm one of the more serious claims levelled at an electoral commission in this thesis; the Victorian Electoral Matters Committee’s claim that the VEC’s administration of early voting directly affected early voting turnout. A better explanation for the rapid development of early voting directly affected early voting in Victoria since 2002 is that Victoria, like NSW, has followed an institution-driven, path-dependent process. The Victorian Parliament, due to the advocacy of Colin Barry, the then Victorian Electoral Commissioner, completely overhauled its electoral legislation, including minor reforms to voting procedures and early voting. Making it easier for people to vote early was clearly an important issue for the VEC, given its first-hand insights into electoral behaviour and growing demand for the former ‘oral postal vote’. Electoral modernisation coincided with increased demand for flexible voting for federal and NSW state elections; these considerations made it acceptable for the Parliament to insert the oral declaration in the 2005 Bill.

Evidence from Chapters Nine and Ten also directly supports Bersinky’s (2005) thesis that electoral reforms can have unintended consequences. Given that the positive association between early voting and the 2CP early voting centre count was estimated in the turnout models for the 2002 Victorian state election, it is surprising that the adoption of Victoria’s liberalised early voting regime was never seriously impacted by partisanship. In fact, there was a demonstrable consensus amongst Labor, Liberal and Independents in the 54th – 56th Parliaments about flexible voting reforms (The Nationals have been consistently sceptical of early voting but their capacity to voice these concerns has been constrained by the nature of their Coalition agreement with the Liberal Party). This supports a view that the growth of early voting has crept up on Victoria’s political parties, as suggested by Dr Peter Phelps in NSW (Phelps 2014, p.4) and Noah Carroll to the Victorian Electoral Matters Committee (Parliament of Victoria 2015, p.44), and that political parties did not fully comprehend what
impact the oral declaration would have on early voting demand in Victoria post-2005 (and in NSW post-2006). This directly challenges Farrell and McAllister’s (2006, p.11) argument about the parliamentary sphere’s control over the rules of Australian electoral administration, and James’ suggestion (2013) that partisans manipulate electoral administration to their own ends. In Victoria’s case, the VEC proposed electoral reform, then flexible voting ‘took off’; the Victoria’s Electoral Matters Committee belatedly supported early voting once it was clear it could not be reined in. Combined, this sequence of events suggests that flexible voting had a life of its own in the mid-2000s. Moreover, this complex sequence of interactions, and the ‘non-strategic’ approach of Victoria’s political parties to early voting because of unintended consequences, is captured by the historical-comparative derived assessment framework.

The next and final chapter summarises the thesis’ major findings, and assesses the efficacy of the assessment framework, quantitative analysis and mixed-methods research design. It also explores some of the public policy implications of the thesis’ findings about early voting at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections.
Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

During the interview program Bill Shepheard, the then NT Electoral Commissioner, said that the growth of early voting at Australian elections was the most significant “shift in Australian electoral administration in 100 years” (Shepheard 2013, p.3). The findings in this thesis confirm Shepheard’s – and indeed most interviewees – views. At a time when Australia’s tripartite model of turnout at Australian general elections is declining – the 2016 federal election saw a turnout rate of 90.1 percent, the lowest in 30 years – early voting has grown significantly, and there are now many electoral Districts in Victoria and NSW where more electors vote before Election Day than on it. This is a momentous shift in the traditional, Election Day-centric model of electoral administration that all Australian electoral commissions are currently grappling with. It is also likely that early voting will continue to increase at future Australian elections. Despite the ‘lost votes’ saga at the 2013 federal election and widespread calls for electronic voting, NSW’s iVote system is an outlier in the Australian electoral landscape because many other Australian jurisdictions have been, and remain, reluctant to adopt remote voting due to security fears (Parliament of Victoria 2017). Coupled with the declining reliability of the postal service and its impact on postal voting, this means early voting is the next best option for the increasing number of Australian electors who prefer flexible voting methods and flexible engagement with government (Australia Post 2016).

This thesis used a mixed-methods sequential exploratory design to investigate two specific questions relating to early voting at Australian elections. Focusing on federal, NSW and Victorian state elections this thesis analysed what factors influenced the adoption of six minor and technical reforms to early voting administration between 2002 and 2015 – these changes liberalised access to early voting in person and introduced remote voting in NSW in 2011. This is the first time in the Australian electoral literature that reforms to the administration of voting procedures – in this case early voting – have been rigorously analysed using established theoretical frameworks for assessing electoral reform. This thesis also examined the impact of early voting on voter turnout at the 11 Australian general elections, marking the first quantitative analysis of early voting in the Australian electoral literature. Further, analysis of the impact of early voting on voter turnout in a compulsory voting system makes a unique contribution to the US and international convenience voting
literature – indeed, that literature rarely mentions Australia, despite the rapid, recent growth of early voting.

This chapter summarises the thesis’ main contributions to knowledge. It begins by restating conclusions about the thesis’ two major research questions. It then addresses the implications of these findings for theories of electoral reform in relation to the first thesis’ first research question, and theories of voter turnout and convenience voting in relation to the second research question. Following this the chapter discusses some of the limitations of this study, implications of the thesis’ findings for public policy and electoral administration and suggestions for further research into early voting in Australia and comparable jurisdictions.

Conclusions about research questions

Research question one

The thesis’ first major research question asked: to what extent can we assess and explain the drivers of early voting reforms for federal, NSW and Victorian state elections from 2002 to 2015? To answer this question, the thesis’ developed an assessment framework adapting Rahat and Hazan’s ‘barriers to reform’ (2011) model and Norris’ policy cycle model (2009), modifying the framework by adding two additional criteria to assess the role of Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees, and electoral commissions, in minor reform. Chapter Five applied the framework to two legislative reforms to early voting for federal elections, the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Pre-poll Voting and Other Measures) Bill 2010 (Cwth) and the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Improving Electoral Administration) Act 2013 (Cwth). Chapter Seven applied the framework to two reforms for early voting for NSW state elections, the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Act Bill 2006 (NSW) and the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Further Amendments Bill 2010 (NSW), which introduced iVote, NSW’s remote voting system. Chapter Nine applied the framework to two legislative reforms to early voting for Victorian state elections – the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) and the Electoral Legislation (Further Amendment) Bill 2005 (Vic).

Finding One: Non-partisan character of minor early voting reforms

The thesis’ first major finding is that partisan interest, or barrier four: actors’ vested interests in the assessment framework did not significantly influence the adoption of early voting reforms in any of the three jurisdictions in this thesis. With respect to barrier four, throughout
the thesis there was a consistent finding that political parties and parliamentarians were mostly uninterested in minor legislative reforms to early voting because these reforms usually formed part of a wider, major electoral reform agenda. Chapter Five demonstrated the Rudd / Gillard Labor government’s attempts to overhaul the Howard Liberal government’s restrictive changes to electoral enrolment, and ongoing battles between Liberal and Labor regarding Labor’s attempts to introduce direct enrolment, consumed energy that might otherwise have gone into analysing the impact of ‘declassifying’ declaration votes. Treating early votes as ordinary votes for the purposes of vote counting was uniformly supported in the federal Parliament. Chapter Seven demonstrated that the NSW Parliament – and indeed the NSW JSCEM – showed little interest in Antony Green’s suggestion to remove the dual declaration for early voting, and this passed as part of a Bill designed to modernise NSW’s electoral administration and properly fund the State Electoral Office. Even iVote, now the world’s largest remote voting system, was introduced with relatively little fanfare, as demonstrated in Chapter Seven, and only some partisan concern about the potential for the system to be inappropriately used by electors without vision impairment. In Chapter Nine about Victoria, the Bracks Labor government’s overhaul of Victoria’s antiquated electoral legislation between 2002-2005, including clarifying the terminology around early voting and inserting the oral declaration in the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic), was mostly supported by the then Liberal Opposition. Only the VEC’s administration of early voting centres attracted some partisan controversy.

A consistent lack of interest in the administration and minor reform of voting procedures above contrasts with the prevailing rational choice theories of electoral reform (Benoit 2004; Renwick 2010; Cox 1997) outlined in Chapter Two. These posit that major electoral reform is usually the product of partisan self-interest; that is, politicians or actors will seek to change electoral systems and electoral rules to secure their re-election (Benoit 2004, p.363). These findings also contrast with newer research from James (2013) about how elites might manipulate the rules and procedures of electoral administration to their own ends; attempts by Republican legislatures in the US to wind back early voting access, particularly Florida, were discussed in Chapter Three. Political wrangling over direct enrolment in Australia – the Liberal Party accuses Labor of using it to fatten up the roll to its benefit (Brent and Jackman 2007) – is another good example. However, the evidence in Chapters Five, Seven and Nine sustains arguments about the drivers of convenience voting reforms in the US; Biggars and Hanmer (2015, p.200) found inconsistent partisan effects in the US for the adoption of early
voting an no-excuse absentee voting. They also found that partisans tended to support early voting when it was couched in terms of enhancing participation or the electoral system, despite the political battles in the US around early voting; Fullmer (2013, p.214) found the same. A similar process seems to have happened in the three jurisdictions in this thesis; minor early voting reform was pitched as part of a broader effort to improve electoral administration, particularly in NSW and Victoria where electoral legislation had not been substantially reformed for close to 100 years. Using the historical comparative framework enabled the thesis to capture this dynamic.

Finding Two: That Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees have contributed to liberalising access to early voting in the three jurisdictions in this thesis

The thesis’ second major finding is that Australia’s three dedicated parliamentary electoral matters committees have played an important role in the adoption of minor early voting reforms. This finding immediately contrasts with prevailing views of these committees, notably Kelly (2008) and Brent (2008; 2016), who have argued that Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees are “compromised” (Kelly 2008, p.72) by partisanship, affecting their capacity to contribute to policymaking. Federally, Chapter Five demonstrated that the Commonwealth JSCEM’s position on early voting developed over a 15-year period spanning the Howard Liberal and Rudd Labor governments. Although the Rudd government’s election in 2007 coincided with a change in JSCEM’s party control and the adoption of measures in the 2010 Bill creating pre-poll ordinary votes for voting counting purposes, this position owes as much to the Rudd government’s interest in winding back electoral reform as it does to the JSCEM’s long-term interest in early voting; in this way, the Commonwealth JSCEM acted as clearinghouse for evidence about the need to prevent a delayed election result through minor reform. This is a clear example of what Russell and Benton call “adjudication” (2011, p.p.81-84), or the capacity of the committee to assemble a body of evidence over a period of time, to eventually effect a policy debate. Similarly, the NSW JSCEM was crucial in promulgating support for the growth of flexible voting. As shown in Chapter Seven, without the NSW JSCEM, Antony Green’s proposal to remove the dual declaration for early voting would have remained buried in a newspaper column. Later, airing crucial evidence about the cost effectiveness of remote voting in relation to kiosk voting, as well as evidence from members of the vision-impaired community about how they valued they secret vote, propelled NSW to adopt a radical, internationally unique remote voting system, iVote. These findings deeply contrast with Kelly’s (2008) description of committee partisanship.
The influence of Victoria’s Electoral Matters Committee on minor and technical early voting reform is unequivocal, but necessary to summarise separately as it was the one example in the three jurisdictions where partisan interests threatened to overwhelm minor early voting reform. At one stage, in the 57th Parliament the Electoral Matters Committee fought the rise of early voting, arguing that the VEC was encouraging flexible voting and taking a lax approach to enforcing the oral declaration in s98 of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic) – this was partially substantiated by Victorian Supreme Court in 2015. However, as demonstrated by Reader (2014a), the committee’s position on early voting moderated to one of support by the end of the 57th Parliament, owing to the committee’s close relationship with the VEC and the VEC’s use of the committee to disseminate an argument about the need for direct enrolment at Victorian state elections. Allowing the electoral commission – in this case the VEC – to float policy ideas via the inquiry process is a crucial function of Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees consistent with what Russell and Benton call “agenda setting” (2013, p.81).

Finding Three: Contrary to their organisational mission statement, the AEC, NSW Electoral Commission and VEC have all advocated for minor early voting reform, using the parliamentary electoral matters committee as a means to pursue this policy objective

The inter-relationship between Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committee and electoral commissions leads to the thesis’ third major finding; that the AEC, NSW Electoral Commission and VEC as organisations influenced, and advocated for, the six early voting reforms in this thesis. In specific instances, their actions also influenced the uptake of early voting. This finding falls somewhere between the two positions in the critical literature on electoral management bodies. On the one hand, Tham (2013, p.15) argued that Australia’s electoral commissions can perform a valuable public role “by fostering democratic deliberation of electoral rules by enhancing the deliberation occurring in other institutional contexts”, imparting expert knowledge to improve electoral processes. On the other, the ACE Project (ACE Project 2016) and several interview participants see electoral commissions as independent statutory officers of the parliament who must remain independent and impartial so as to ensure the legitimacy of electoral outcomes they oversee (Gately 2014, p.3). In reality, these finding accords with Hughes (2003, p.215) conclusion that Australia’s electoral commissions should – and mostly do – act as a counterbalance to the capacity of parliaments to make electoral laws unfettered. Tham (2013, p.15) also argued that this counterbalancing
feature is an appropriate role. Returning to Chapter Two and questions about the normative value of electoral reform, this thesis has demonstrated that Australia’s electoral commissions have intervened to offer an important check on parliamentary regulation in this area; if the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee had had its way in the 56th Parliament the early voting period at Victorian state elections would have been reduced to a week and the oral declaration scrapped. This would have undoubtedly inconvenienced a good portion of the 800,000 plus electors who voted early at the 2014 Victorian state election.

Of the three commissions in this thesis, the AEC had perhaps the least influence on minor reform to early voting procedures. Although creating Home Division early votes was an AEC initiative, the Rudd government’s green paper process and the animosity between the then Liberal and Labor parties in relation to electoral reform was a greater influence on early voting reform during the study period. In contrast, in NSW the NSW Electoral Commission played an unequivocally influential role in the development of early voting and remote voting. By leading the public policy ‘drive’ to modernise NSW’s electoral system in the early 2000s, the Commission also de facto supported flexible voting methods and advocated for remote voting over kiosk voting, including advocating for the Commission to have considerable rule making power over iVote and who could access the system. Chapter Nine demonstrated that the VEC probably contributed to a perception that early voting did not require an excuse by providing inaccurate training materials to election staff at early voting centres, who then misinterpreted the oral declaration in s98 of the Electoral Act 2002 (Vic). There is also evidence that the VEC’s placement of early voting centres has had some impact on early voting turnout, as we shall see in the next section addressing research question two.

**Finding Four: Senior electoral officials influenced minor and technical early voting reform in NSW and Victoria**

Electoral authorities are more than just institutions, however, and electoral reform is also influenced by prominent individuals (Renwick 2010, p.11; Sawer 2001; Norris 2009). This thesis demonstrated that two Australian electoral commissioners, Colin Barry (who served as both Victorian and NSW Electoral Commissioner) and Steve Tully (who served as South Australian then Victorian Electoral Commissioner following Barry’s move to NSW in 2004), certainly influenced early voting reform in NSW and Victoria. Regarding Barry, it is clear that he was a skilled senior electoral official who was not opposed to facilitating early voting. Chapters Seven and Nine demonstrated that Barry supported, and led, the policy
modernisation of Victoria’s and NSW’s electoral legislation, including ‘as of right’ flexible voting. A common theme in the interview evidence, and indeed the assessment frameworks for NSW and Victorian electoral reforms, was Barry’s high-level contacts and advocacy with the NSW and Victorian governments. Using these contacts, he was able to legitimize Green’s call to remove the dual declaration, and argue for NSW to introduce – and then expand – iVote at NSW state elections. In a similar way, through Tully’s influence the VEC adopted an overall supportive institutional posture towards early voting in the mid-to-late 2000s. Both men also set the tone for more ‘interventionist’ electoral commissioners – Tom Rogers public defence of the AEC’s apparently slow vote counting processes at the 2016 federal election owes something to their legacy. What do these two findings mean for prevailing critical understanding of the role of Australia’s electoral authorities? This question is addressed in the next section addressing implications for theory.

Research question two

The thesis’ second major research question was: to what extent have Australia’s early voting reforms impacted voter turnout at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections from 2002 to 2015? To answer this question the thesis developed four models of voter turnout; the Resources model, the Social-Cultural model, the Political model and the Electoral / Institutional model, based on extant theories explaining why people turnout to vote. The aim of the thesis’ quantitative research design is clear; given that the minor early voting reforms examined in the thesis’ first research question were all ostensibly designed to increase access to early voting, the Resources theory of electoral participation suggests that expanding access to the ballot will only benefit those who are already likely to vote. But in an Australian context, where voting is compulsory, Lijphart (1997) suggests that participation is ‘flattened out’ and socio-economic biases in the electorate are less pronounced. Accordingly, measures designed to make it easier for people to vote early should theoretically, in Australia, draw in electors from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Given that the compositional effects of early voting reforms are contested, and that there is little, if any, research into the compositional effects of early voting in Australia, this is a new contribution to the voter turnout literature and Australian electoral literature.

The thesis’ major hypothesis regarding the second research question is: At the District level, that early voting is negatively associated with socio-economic factors consistent with the Resource Model of Participation – employment and tertiary education. To test this, the thesis
employed the four voter turnout models, regressing the rate of early voting at three federal elections, three NSW state elections and four Victorian state elections. For NSW, the thesis also regressed the rate of iVote at the 2015 NSW state election against the voter turnout models, to compare and contrast iVote, another form of early voting, with early voting results. The logic behind this, as noted in Chapter Eight, was that the electronic voting literature demonstrates that remote voting benefits people who have greater resources and fluency with the internet. A unique data set allowed investigation of whether iVote’s expansion at the 2015 NSW state election actually drew in more vision-impaired voters, or electors who might otherwise have voted early in person. Finally, Chapter Ten utilised a complete extract of the 2010 Victorian state electoral roll to augment the aggregate-level findings in the multivariate analysis with individual-level insights in who might have voted early in person at the 2010 Victorian state election.

Finding Five: That early voting at NSW and Victorian state elections in this thesis was negatively associated with employment and tertiary education, indicating an aggregate-level association between early voting and lower socio-economic state-level electoral Districts

In Chapter Six and Eight evidence from NSW and Victorian state elections and the OLS regressions supported the thesis’ main hypothesis that early voting is negatively associated at the Division and District level with employment and tertiary education. At NSW state elections, socio-economic variables were consistently negatively associated with early voting. In particular, tertiary education, one of the traditional markers in the voter turnout literature of electoral participation (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), was consistently negatively associated with early voting at the three NSW state elections in the cycle. When controlling for social-cultural variables, these effects were the same. In Victoria, there was a similar association between employment and tertiary education. In Victoria the Resources model alone accounted for 15-20 percent of the variance in turnout in 2006, 2010 and 2014. Due to the consistency of these effects over the four election cycles, we can conclude that socio-economic variables are indeed strong, District-level determinants of early voting at Victorian state elections.

These findings offer a new perspective on early voting turnout, and the stimulative effect of minor electoral reforms on early voting behaviour. Earlier in this thesis, notably in Chapters One and Three, the thesis documented that voter turnout at Australian general elections is
declining, as are ‘traditional’ forms of electoral participation such as ordinary voting and postal voting, which as seen in Chapters Six, Eight and Ten – but especially in Chapters Eight and Ten – are quickly being replaced by early voting and remote voting (in NSW). However, early voting is clearly bucking this trend. Findings in Chapter Eight and Ten offer aggregate-level evidence which rebuts the relative consensus in the US convenience voting literature that early voting only draws in established electors in a non-compulsory context (Burden et al 2012).

But there are two challenges to the thesis’ hypothesis, as below.

**Finding Six: At the 2010 and 2013 federal elections there was an interactive effect between direct enrolment, population mobility and early voting.**

At the 2010 federal election, in the Electoral / Institutional model early voting was positively associated with tertiary education (Beta 0.277, p < .05), strongly negatively associated with turnout (Beta -0.516, p < .001) and positively associated with population density (Beta 0.288, p < .01) and one-year address change (Beta 0.291, p < .01). These effects carried over somewhat to the 2013 federal election, including a strong association between enrolment and early voting. What do these findings say about the thesis’ major hypothesis? As shown in Chapter Six, it is plausible that the introduction of direct enrolment in 2010 may have captured some populations who experience barriers to electoral participation, as theorised by Highton (2000) and demonstrated by Hoffman and Lazaridis (2013, p.41) empirical studies of voter turnout at Australian state elections. These findings also support findings in the voter turnout literature that the disrupted social connections caused by moving are less of a deterrent to turnout than the need to maintain one’s electoral enrolment. Moreover, this finding demonstrates the interconnected nature of Australia’s tripartite electoral participation problem.

**Finding Seven: iVote is strongly positively associated with employment and tertiary education, supporting findings in the electronic voting literature about the compositional biases of electronic voting**

The thesis’ seventh finding is that iVote at the 2015 NSW state election was strongly positively associated at the District level with employment and particularly tertiary education. Employment and tertiary education explained up to 78 percent of the variance in District-level iVote at the 2015 NSW state election – the strongest Resources model effect in this
thesis – with the Social-Cultural, Political and Electoral / Institutional models only explaining a further 4-8 percent of the variance in iVote at the 2015 NSW state election. Further, electoral / institutional variables support this conclusion; the thesis demonstrated a District level association between iVote and turnout; as shown in Chapter Eight, most of the top 10 iVote seats were inner-metropolitan Sydney Districts. This finding supports other empirical analyses of state-level remote voting systems, such as Bochsler’s (2010) study of Estonia. It also harmonises with the electronic voting literature, which has established that early-stage remote voting systems are likely to favour electors who have greater resources, higher levels of education and relatedly, greater fluency with the internet (Estonian National Electoral Committee 2016, p.168; Norris 2005, p.65; Alvarez et al 2008).

In the case of iVote, while we were unable to directly compare iVote at the 2011 and 2015 NSW state elections due to publicly available iVote data in 2011 not being disaggregated from postal voting data, it is clear that a unique, path dependent set of circumstances probably influenced the positive association between iVote and the Resources model. In association with the 2012 regulatory amendments allowing people outside NSW to use iVote, the NSW Electoral Commission’s decision to allow people to self-report their entitlement to iVote – in conjunction with widespread media coverage in NSW about potential security issues with iVote and the NSW Electoral Commission’s subsequent advertising of iVote – probably contributed to model effects seen in Chapter Eight. This is an excellent example of Bersinky’s (2005) theory of the unintended consequences of electoral reform. What was meant to be a relatively minor reform in 2010 to assist NSW electors with vision impairment to cast a secret vote (targeting originally about 10,000 people) became a much bigger system once different technical options were filtered through the NSW JSCEM and the NSW Electoral Commission. A minor reform therefore, in 2015, became a minor reform with major consequences.

Finding Eight: A consistent, positive association between early voting at the closeness of the 2CP early voting centre count, and inversely, a negative association between early voting and the 2CP general count

While it was not one of the thesis’ aims to contribute to the emerging literature on early voting and partisanship, findings from the Political and Electoral / Institutional model suggest an aggregate-level positive association between early voting and the 2CP early voting centre count in each of the three jurisdictions in this thesis (except for the 2013 federal election,
where the effect was not statistically significant). In other words, a bigger margin between the two candidates at the early voting centre count was a marker of early voting. While an aggregate-level association, this finding supports the idea in the US convenience voting literature that early voting might have partisan implications (Ashok et al 2016). The only corollary to this finding comes from Chapter Eight. The chapter demonstrated an inverse relationship; that the closeness of the 2CP count overall was positively associated with iVote and the closeness of the 2CP early voting centre count negatively associated with iVote. Returning to research from Estonia, Bochsler (2010, p.19) found that internet voting at the “2007 Estonian elections was socially unbalanced, and drew a disproportionate share of voters with a high formal education, and who resided in affluent, Estonian-speaking areas”. Under either scenario, partisanship seems linked to early voting.

If early voters are more partisan, as demonstrated by Ashok et al (2016), then what effect does this have on electoral participation? iVote offers some interesting perspectives on this subject. In the Estonian case, Bochsler found that certain parties – “particularly the ones belonging to the new governing coalition and the newly competing Green party – have proven particularly successful with Internet voters. The oppositional Centre Party, which attracts a higher proportion of ethnic minorities in Estonia, along with a few smaller minority parties, won hardly any of the votes cast on the Internet”. Antony Green found similar patterns with iVote at the 2015 NSW state election; table 11.1 demonstrates that iVotes tended to skew to the Coalition – like postal votes – Labor attracted slightly less iVotes than the Coalition and the Greens experienced a substantial jump in iVote turnout, nearly 50 percent higher than the rate of ordinary votes and nearly double the rate of early voting. Moreover, the finding about an aggregate association between early voting at partisanship suggests one of two things; that early voters are likely to be electors who probably migrated to early voting from postal voting; and, that iVoters, at least using NSW data from the 2015 NSW state election, were somewhat more likely to vote for either the Liberals or the Greens than Labor. This finding offers additional support for the strong positive association between iVote and the Resources model of voter turnout, and the variables of employment and tertiary education.
Table 11.1: Percentage of party vote by vote type, 2015 NSW state election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Ordinary</th>
<th>Early voting</th>
<th>Absent voting</th>
<th>iVote</th>
<th>Postal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Democrats</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Land Tax</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent / Others</td>
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<td>5.6</td>
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Conclusions about the research questions – implications for theory

In addition to the conclusions above, this thesis also has the following implications for theory.

Qualitative

- Explaining electoral reform, minor and technical reform

One of the questions raised in Chapter Three was: how frequent is minor and technical reform? Judging by the evidence in this thesis, electoral reform happens frequently and “under the surface”, as noted by Rahat and Hazan (2011). If major reforms were used as a marker of electoral reform in the Australian context, such as reforms to voting systems like the recent overhaul of Senate voting practices in 2015/2016, as well as Queensland’s recent rescinding of optional preferential voting, then Australian electoral reform would be relatively infrequent. If we include major reforms to electoral administration, such as the introduction of direct enrolment federally, in NSW and Victoria, reform becomes more frequent. However, if including reforms such as the 10 minor reforms to early voting procedures in this thesis, then reform is suddenly frequent. Accordingly, this thesis makes a major contribution to the Australian electoral literature by focusing on reforms to the administration of voting practices, demonstrating that contemporary assessment frameworks for assessing what causes electoral reform can be adapted to a minor reform context; besides
the voluminous work on direct enrolment, and Qvortrup’s (2005) assessment of absentee
ing, this is the first time the drivers of early voting reforms and early voting’s effect on
turnout has been studied. In this way, the thesis addresses Farrell and McAllister’s call (2006,
p.169) for additional work on minor electoral reform in Australia.

Another question raised in Chapter Three was: paraphrasing Jacobs and Leyenaar (2011,
p.498), can existing explanatory frameworks for major electoral reform be adapted to explain
minor and technical reform? The thesis suggests the answer is a solid yes, as the principles
are similar. The ‘solution’ seems to rest on Renwick’s (2010) and Rahat and Hazan’s (2011)
claim about the importance of country-level knowledge in relation to electoral reform. For
instance, in this thesis, the assessment framework is strengthened by the inclusion of barriers
five and six about Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees and electoral
commissions. Given there is relatively little written about either of these institutions in either
the committee effectiveness literature or the international electoral reform literature,
including these barriers allowed the framework to reflect a unique Australian dynamic. It is
also possible to use the framework ‘as is’ to assess the drivers of other examples of
Australian minor electoral reform; a good example in this instance might be the widespread
adoption by Australia’s electoral commissions of IT-based election management systems,
which happened simultaneously throughout the 1990s / early 2000s. Using the framework,
one might capture how a systemic imperative – the need for electoral commissions to
embrace computerised election technology, such as counting processes – was advocated by
electoral commissions and legitimated by the parliamentary electoral matters committee. The
Parliament of Victoria’s 2016 / 2017 inquiry into electronic voting demonstrates this
suitability.

The only theoretical reservation about the assessment framework relates to its definitional
scope. That is, what happens when, in the case of iVote, what was meant to be a minor
reform has major systemic-level consequences on voter turnout? How could the framework
be changed to capture this dynamic? As an ex-post assessment tool – i.e., one that assesses
reforms after the fact – the framework has limited utility for analysing fast-moving electoral
policy reforms. A potential modification might be to focus on barrier four; actors’ vested
interests. We know from the US early voting literature, such as Fullmer (2013, p.204), that
reforms liberalising access to early voting in the US were rarely challenged on grounds of
partisan self-interest but became political following policy implementation; Texas and
Florida are good examples – in both states Republican state legislatures supported early
voting laws in the late 1980s and 1990s, but then attempted to limit access to early voting from the mid-2000s onwards. Given that no excuse early voting is less than 10 year’s old in both NSW and Victoria, and iVote even younger, capturing this shifting partisan approach through an additional barrier focused on ‘changing partisan perceptions’ seems a potential solution.

- Role of Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees

Despite Kelly (2008) and Brent’s (2008; 2016) claims of partisanship colouring their contribution to reform, Australia’s parliamentary electoral matters committees have clearly contributed to minor electoral reform. Concentrating on Victoria in 2015 provides an interesting mini-case study in relation to early voting and electoral systems reform. Following the 2013 federal election and the election of minor parties to the Senate on very small percentages of the first preference vote – former Senator Ricky Muir was elected on 0.51 percent of first preferences – the Victorian Parliament was concerned about a similar influx of minor party candidates at the 2018 Victorian state election. Concerns about early voting also arose following the 2014 Victorian state election and the Rigoni petition about early voting, as discussed in Chapter Nine. These issues arose during the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matter Committee inquiry into the 2014 Victorian state election. While the committee, featuring a majority of major party (Coalition and Labor) members could have easily recommended voting changes to curtail the election of minor parties to the Senate – such as those adopted by the federal Parliament in 2015 – the committee elected not to do so. The committee also gave its strongest support for early voting since its inception in 2007. Both outcomes heavily favour the ‘elector’ and electoral fairness, and operate across minor and major reform scenarios.

- Role of Australia’s electoral commissions in electoral rule-making and setting public policy

Based on the evidence in Chapters Seven and Nine about the NSW Electoral Commission and VEC respectively, it is difficult to see how Australia’s electoral commissions can continue to publicly advise that they do not participate in policy or proposal policy. This is to be expected: as we have seen, Colin Barry said that “electoral commissioners are a bit like cricket umpires…they are outside the game…but in it too” (Kelly 2008, p.82), summing up the role of a modern Australian electoral commission. This thesis demonstrates that the NSW Electoral Commission and the VEC, and the AEC to a lesser extent, supported and in some
cases advocated for liberalised access to early voting. This was justified on the pretext of modernising electoral legislation to suit contemporary elector expectations. The question is: can Australia’s electoral commissions provide this advice – which is clearly important because, as experts (Renwick 2010; Sawer 2011) they offer unique, practical insights into electoral administration – whilst not compromising the neutrality they need to administer and oversee ‘fair’, impartial elections? Tham (2013, p.11) sees some potential here. While Tham cautioned against electoral commissions participating in “the executive process of rule-making” (2013, p.11) – something there is potential evidence of in NSW in relation to Barry’s advocacy of iVote – he argued that commissions can enhance deliberation of electoral rules in other institutional contexts, such as the legislature and the media (Tham 2013, p.10).

Building on Tham (2013) and referring to Hughes (2003), the thesis proposes that this separation go further; to separate the office of the electoral commissioner from the electoral commission. At present in NSW and Victoria, the electoral commission’s employment is provided in legislation. Uncoupling their employment from legislation would allow the commissioner to oversee the electoral commission organisationally, but stand separate for important deliberative functions, such as participating in parliamentary electoral matters inquiries. There is already some evidence of this occurring in relation to electronic voting; several Australian electoral commissions have changed their position on remote voting as a result of iVote’s implementation, making representations to the Parliament of Victoria’s 2016 inquiry into electronic voting, and the Commonwealth JSCEM’s inquiry into the 2016 Victorian state election, about the utility of remote voting. Notably, these representations featured in submissions presented by the commissioner on behalf of the electoral commission organisation – David Kerslake’s submission to the Victorian Parliament’s Electoral Matters Committee inquiry into electronic voting is a good example (Kerslake 2016). Assessing whether this is a suitable format for Australia’s electoral commissions to contribute to electoral reform is a potential topic for researchers interested in institutional design; Klassen (2014) analysed this briefly in his cross-jurisdictional work on what factors affect public trust in electoral management bodies.
Quantitative

- Is flexible voting a panacea for declining turnout in the Australian context?

In a recent submission to the Commonwealth JSCEM, Australia Post said that 90 percent of respondents to an Australia Post survey about electronic interactions with government said that they preferred to vote when they wanted to, and in a format they preferred (Australia Post 2016). However, the evidence in this thesis for this proposition is mixed. On the one hand, a combination of the descriptive statistics showing the substantial growth in early voting over the past decade federally, in NSW and Victoria, coupled with the model evidence from NSW and Victoria showing the negative association between early voting and the Resources model of voter participation, suggests that early voting might well be ‘picking up the slack’ caused by declines in ordinary voting and postal voting. Of course, without individual data we cannot confirm this. On the other hand, when iVote was available to electors who were theoretically outside NSW on Election Day, evidence suggests the system was potentially misused due to the self-reporting registration feature – those misusing it were probably living in more affluent areas of Sydney. So to the extent that turnout was dramatically stimulated by iVote, questions remain about the character of this turnout (although iVote’s success at helping the vision-impaired to cast a secret vote is drastically superior to Victoria).

Limitations

This thesis has two methodological limitations. While they do not detract from the thesis’ overall findings they must be accounted for.

The first is the reliance on aggregate-level electoral data for the model findings (notwithstanding the individual-level observations from the 2010 Victorian state election in Chapter Ten). As King (1997) and others have noted in the past, aggregate-level data suggest, at best, that we can treat the model findings as estimates of District-level associations between aggregate electoral and Census data. Such findings obviously leave considerable room for interpretation. Yet this problem is one affecting most aspects of Australian electoral studies. As noted in the Introduction several Australian electoral commissions are statutorily prohibited from providing de-identified roll information to researchers. They also do not release ballot papers for analysis – much to the chagrin of Australia’s political parties – out of caution, meaning that informal ballot research is usually conducted in house. In contrast,
electoral roll data is readily available in US, with researchers required to sign basic usage agreements saying they would not use the ID information for personal gain. To advance Australian electoral studies, electoral commissions should provide data to researchers in a similar arrangement. The University of Melbourne Law School’s Electoral Regulation Research Network is embracing this type of partnership; several researchers are investigating the rise of convenience voting at Australian elections, and are due to report their findings in 2018.

Another obvious de-limitation in this thesis was the three-jurisdiction focus. While including additional jurisdictions, such as the ACT, which has the highest rates of early voting in Australia, would provide additional insights into early voting, space was limited in this thesis. Exploring the ACT’s experience with early voting would make an excellent dissertation of itself given the ACT Electoral Commission’s leading role in the development of electronic voting.

**Implications for policy**

With early voting increasing at all Australian jurisdictions, this thesis has several implications for policy regarding the administration of voting procedures in Australia.

The first is that this thesis demonstrates that recent calls in some Australian jurisdictions to curtail access to early voting might have a negative effect on participation, particularly given the findings in Chapters Eight and Ten. South Australia has experienced a recent upswing in early voting, with a 200 percent increase in early voting between 2010 and 2014 South Australian state elections. In late 2016 the South Australian Attorney General introduced a Bill limiting early voting to the week before Election Day to a period of five days, and to have the Electoral Commission of South Australia more aggressively pursue people who voted early without a valid excuse for not voting on Election Day (The Advertiser 2016). Based on the findings in this thesis, truncating the early voting period at a time when early voting has increased twofold would surely have a negative compositional effect; Chapter Ten established that most early votes are cast in the final few days before Election Day in Victoria (other states are probably similar). Electors accustomed to voting early would be disadvantaged, as would those who have habitually voted early as of right, such as elderly electors and electors with disabilities. Reducing the early voting period would also cause havoc for electoral commissions, who would be forced to provide early voting services to a
growing number of early voters in a shorter time frame. Large queues at early voting centres would result.

Compositionally, there is also the possibility that overall turnout would be affected by such policy because the few surveys we have in Australia assessing what electors think about early voting consistently show that electors value flexible voting services. In 2010 the VEC commissioned market research firm Colmar Brunton (Colmar Brunton 2010) to conduct its post-election evaluation. As part of this exercise, the firm interviewed 100 early voters in Melbourne, and two regional locations. They found that eight out of ten electors highly valued early voting due to convenience, and would likely vote early again at future Victorian state elections (Colmar Brunton 2010, p.3). The implication here is that most electors, not just early voters, like voting when it suits them – this was noted by the AEC (2014, p.4) also – meaning that early voting is likely to increase due to elector demand.

Two, complementary factors will also ensure early voting continues to increase at most Australian elections; the interplay between declining postal voting and the likelihood of midscale adoption of electronic voting. With Australia Post continuing to transition its business model from being a letter-based delivery company to a parcel-based business, questions remain about the medium-term viability of postal voting. Many electoral commissions, including the AEC, the NSW Electoral Commission and the VEC have flagged their concerns about the reliability of postal voting into the future, as well as the cost effectiveness of the service. As an alternative, some commissions have investigated introducing an iVote-style remote voting system (VEC 2016, p.3). However, in many jurisdictions, remote voting is just not politically palatable. Many policymakers have legitimate concerns about the security of iVote based on the 2015 iVote security flaws, as well as more recent concerns about cyber-security and reliability due to allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 US general elections, and the 2016 Democratic National Convention (BBC 2017). In Australia, the 2016 ABS Census of Population and Housing, which many commentators consider flawed due to the ABS’s computer system crashing on Census night (Keane 2016, p.1) – meaning that many Australians did not actually complete Census at the designated time – has also raised questions about the reliability of internet-to-government transactions. Together, these factors demonstrate that the likelihood of several Australian jurisdictions adopting electronic voting simultaneously is low; in the absence of such an initiative, increased early voting seems inevitable.
Evidence from Estonia also suggests a cautionary approach in relation to remote voting, if Australian jurisdictions adopt iVote-style systems. Estonia found that “governments adopting electronic voting practices should not decide immediately after the first few internet voting trials on whether or not to continue to offer internet voting and whether it appeals only to a homogeneous subpopulation of technology enthusiasts or does it also attract voters that are less savvy with computers” (Estonian National Electoral Committee 2016, p.p.167-168). Introducing remote voting to a restricted franchise will only result in compositional biases, as seen in the iVote findings. Either allow everyone to use it, or no one at all.

Moreover, is early voting a ‘good thing’ for the Australian electoral process? Orr’s (2014) work on the ritualistic aspects of Australian elections is perhaps the foremost theoretical rumination on this question. Orr is genuinely sceptical of early voting; while he accepts that there is a genuine place for early voting for people who legitimately cannot vote on Election Day, and for those who need to vote before Election Day due to disabilities, he has argued that the wholesale adoption of convenience voting will affect Australia’s key election traditions, including Thompson’s (2004) idea of electoral simultaneity, or that an election is an event when we all vote together, at the same time. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in this thesis overwhelms Orr’s treatise. With turnout at Australian general elections continuing to decline, do policymakers suddenly – after nearly a decade of permissive voting practices – limit early voting services for those accustomed to convenience? In an era when trust of politicians is at record lows (Martin et al 2014), membership of political parties has plummeted (Martin 2010) and alternative forms of political expression are the preferred forms of political participation amongst the affluent and young (Martin 2010), do policymakers restrict access to the vote? This thesis suggests a clear ‘no’ answer.

**Further research**

If early voting remains the fastest growing trend in Australian electoral participation, as noted in the Introduction, then further research into early voting is essential. To conclude this thesis, this chapter offers several suggestions.

Given the shortfalls associated with aggregate data analysis, a clear opportunity lies in measuring what electors think of early voting in broad-scale surveys. Inserting a question into the AES about early voting is a logical step, capturing information about when people voted, who they voted for alongside the regular Study descriptors. The Study is often themed – in 2016 for instance it specifically investigated the attitudes of young people to politics and
political engagement. It would be relatively easy to theme the survey around flexible voting methods, due to the emergence of electronic voting. Another opportunity for survey data is the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes; questions about voting mode are rarely inserted in the Survey but there is potential to capture interesting demographic information from the codebook there, particular relating to employment. Moreover, using survey data would enable Australian flexible voting studies to catch up to the US, where critical understanding of early voting is more advanced than Australia.

Assuming survey data is available, another interesting project, building on Finding Eight, would be to contribute to the emerging scholarship on the partisan effects of early voting. As noted earlier, Ashok et al (2016, p.127) compared the demographic characteristics of voters in the 2012 US general elections; they found that “early voters tend to be older and more partisan, while ‘late deciding’ early voters are young and more likely to be independents”. Some of the multinominal findings in Chapter Ten utilising the 2010 Victorian state electoral roll potentially support this finding, particularly the relationship between age and vote mode. Due to these similarities, there are promising, cross-jurisdiction research problems here.

Similarly, as noted in Chapter Three, there is scope to compare early voting in countries with compulsory voting. Beyond Australia, Switzerland, Malta, Argentina and Brazil employ methods of advance voting at the state and national level. While these electoral systems are vastly different to Australia’s preferential voting system, comparative analysis has potential.

***

This thesis has examined the factors which led to several minor and technical reforms to early voting legislation at federal, NSW and Victorian state elections, and the effect of early voting on voter turnout at 10 Australia general elections. It also establishes that early voting is likely to increase at future Australian elections. Over 2.5 million electors voted early at the 2016 federal election. Statistically this represents the enrolment of 25 federal electoral Divisions, or 16 percent of total seats in the House of Representatives. Ironically, while the thesis has demonstrated that partisan interest was not necessarily a major factor influencing the adoption of Australia’s early voting procedures, what policymakers think of remote voting – and what, and when, they ultimately decide to adopt remote voting technology – will determine the next significant chapter in the history of flexible voting methods in Australia.
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Glossary

Like any electoral system, Australia’s has some unique characteristics and terms. This glossary defines some the voting and enrolment terminology used in the thesis, serving as a ‘quick reference’ for the reader. Each term is also defined in the body of the thesis.

Early voting

Early voting is the act of casting a vote before Election Day, which takes place on Saturday in each of Australia’s nine jurisdictions. Early voting occurs during the specified early voting period. Early voting is also known as pre-poll voting.

Early voting period

This is the length of time established for early voting in each Australian electoral jurisdiction. For general federal elections, NSW and Victorian state elections, the writ for the election establishes the length of the early voting period. In some cases, such as for Victorian by-state elections, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly determines the length of the early voting period.

By-election

A by-election in Australia is an election in Australia for a single lower house constituency (a federal lower house constituency is called a Division, a state lower house constituency in NSW and Victoria is called a District) to fill a vacancy arising outside the normal electoral cycle.

Ordinary voting

For federal elections, ordinary votes are votes cast by an elector at a polling place or an early voting centre within their Home electoral constituency.

Provisional voting

A provisional vote is cast when an elector’s name cannot be found on the electoral roll or the name has already been marked off the roll. The vote cannot be counted until a careful check of enrolment records and entitlements has been made. Electors must complete a declaration envelope giving their personal details. This will be checked by electoral staff before the votes are counted.

Absenete voting

An absentee vote is a vote cast by an elector on Election Day outside their home electoral constituency but still within their home state or territory.

Postal voting

Postal voting is a method of early voting in Australia when an elector completes a ballot paper and sends this back via post. In Australia electors can receive ballot materials from electoral commissions by requesting it directly from the commission. Australian registered
political parties are also permitted to send out postal voting applications to eligible electors; party involvement in the postal voting process is quite controversial.

Generally speaking, postal voters are entitled to vote by post if they meet one of the following criteria:

- Live 20km from a voting centre;
- Be seriously ill or infirm, or caring for someone who is;
- Be 70 or more years old;
- Be in prison (but still on the electoral roll – different requirements for federal and some state elections);
- Be a silent elector (an elector who requests their details are visible only to the electoral commission for reasons of personal safety); or
- Be unable to attend on Election Day for religious reasons.

General postal voter

General postal voters are people who always vote via post. They are automatically sent a ballot pack for every election, and must complete and return the ballot material before Election Day. In NSW and Victoria, people who become general postal voters due to age do not automatically receive a ballot paper for federal elections.

Informal voting

An informal vote is any vote for an Australian lower or upper house election which is not completed in line with the requirements set out in legislation. ‘Informal’ is the term used in Australia and is roughly comparable with the term ‘spoilt ballot’. In Australia, as noted in Chapter Three, there is a complex relationship between informal voting and Australia’s preferential voting system.

Pre-poll ordinary voting

A pre-poll ordinary vote is an early vote cast by an elector in their Home electoral Division for a federal election. It was introduced in 2010.

Pre-poll declaration voting

A pre-poll declaration vote is an early vote cast by an elector outside their Home electoral Division for a federal election.

Direct electoral enrolment

Direct electoral enrolment is when either the Australian Electoral Commission, NSW Electoral Commission or Victorian Electoral Commission uses information held by it or an associated agency to enrol an elector, or update their enrolment details.
Compulsory electoral enrolment

Australia was the first Commonwealth country to introduce compulsory electoral enrolment in 1911 (the enabling Bill was actually passed in 1912), and was followed by compulsory voting (for federal elections) in 1924. All Australian citizens aged 18 years and over must be enrolled before they can vote in Australian elections. Further, Australian citizens can provisionally enrol from the age of 16, but cannot vote until they turn 18.

While enrolment is compulsory, Australian electoral commissions rarely pursue prosecutions for failing to maintain enrolment.
Appendix One: Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Approval

To: Prof Brian Costar/Mr Nathaniel Reader [BC: Nathaniel Reader]

Dear Prof Costar,

SUHREC Project 2013/014 Early voting at Australian and US elections
Prof Brian Costar/Mr Nathaniel Reader
Approved Duration: 01/03/2013 To 01/01/2015 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol undertaken on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) by SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC2) at a meeting held on 8 February 2013. Your response to the review as e-mailed on 18 February was reviewed by a SHESC2 delegate.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project may proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/cereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance or you need a signed ethics clearance certificate, citing the SUHREC project number. A copy of this clearance email should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Kaye Goldenberg
Secretary, SHESC2

Kaye Goldenberg
Administrative Officer (Research Ethics)
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel +61 3 9214 8468
Appendix Two: Consent instrument for Human Research – semi-structured interviews

Consent Information Statement

Project Title
Early voting at Australian and US elections.

Investigators and Other Project Personnel
Principal Investigator(s): Nathaniel Reader
Supervisor: Professor Brian Costar
Associate Supervisor: Adjunct Professor Paul Rodan

Introduction to Project and Invitation to Participate
This project investigates early voting in Australia and the US, with a particular focus on early voting in person. As part of this project, I’m interested in investigating elite-level views of early voting in person in Australia, from both electoral commissioners and senior electoral commission staff, members of parliament who are or have been members of a parliamentary electoral matters committee, and senior political party officials.

Project and researcher interests
This project is wholly designed to satisfy the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy at Swinburne University of Technology. No external funding or support is associated with the project. While the researcher is an employee of the Parliament of Victoria this project is not connected in any way to his employment.

What participation will involve – your rights and interests
Participation in this project would entail a 40-minute interview and a potential 20-minute interview following the 2013 federal election. These conversations can be held at a location of your choice and at a time suitable to you. For respondents not based in Melbourne, I have some flexibility to travel to meet you in person.

Interviews will be completed by July 2014.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no and you may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Your consent will be obtained through signed consent – please see the attached form.
I will use an audio device to record our conversations and will store the data in a secure, password protected hard drive, which only the researcher and research supervisors have access to. Your signed consent form will be stored in the same location.

**Research output**
All data will be used for publication in my final PhD thesis, conference proceedings and journal articles. An electronic copy of the thesis will be made available to you on request within six months of the approval date. You may opt out of being named in the publication data and use a pseudonym instead.

**Who to contact for further information about the project**
If you would like further information about the project, please do not hesitate to contact:

**Position Title and Name:** Professor Brian Costar

Swinburne Contact Address: **Institute for Social Research, Level 1, EW Building, Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, VIC 3122**
(Swinburne) Tel No(s): (+61 3) 9214 5899

(Swinburne) Email(s): bcostar@swin.edu.au

**Concerns/complaints about the project**
This project has been approved by or on behalf of Swinburne’s Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) in line with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this project, you can contact:

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (H68),
Swinburne University of Technology, P O Box 218, HAWTHORN VIC 3122.
Tel (03) 9214 5218 or +61 3 9214 5218 or resethics@swin.edu.au
Consent Form

Project Title: Early voting at Australian and US elections.

Principal Investigator(s): Nathaniel Reader

Supervisor: Professor Brian Costar

Associate Supervisor: Adjunct Professor Paul Rodan

1. I consent to participate in the project named above. I have been provided a copy of the project consent information statement to which this consent form relates and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. In relation to this project, please circle your response to the following:
   - I agree to be interviewed by the researcher Yes No
   - I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by electronic device Yes No
   - I agree to make myself available for further information if required Yes No
   - I agree to the use of my name in resultant publications Yes No

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation;
   (b) the Swinburne project is for the purpose of research and not for profit;
   (c) any identifiable information about me which is gathered in the course of and as the result of my participating in this project will be (i) collected and retained for the purpose of this project and (ii) accessed and analysed by the researcher(s) for the purpose of conducting this project;
   (d) the option to preserve my anonymity has been provided; and
   (e) I will not be identified in publications or otherwise without my express written consent.

By signing this document I agree to participate in this project.

Name of Participant: .................................................................

Signature & Date: .................................................................